The

YELLOW TYPHOON

by

HAROLD MACGRATH

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BY

HAROLD MAC GRATH

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THE MAN ON THE BOX, ETC.

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THE YELLOW TYPHOON

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CHAPTER I

A NAVAL officer, trig in his white twill, strode along the Escolta, Manila's leading thoroughfare. There was something in his stride that suggested anger; and the settled grimness of his lips, visible between his mustache and short beard, and the hard brightness of his blue eyes emphasized this suggestion. He was angry, but it was a cold anger, a kind of clear-minded fury which often makes calculation terrible. He had been carrying this anger in his heart for six bitter years. It was something like glacial ice; it moved always, but never seemed to lose either hardness or configuration. To-day it had the effect of the north wind — that almost forgotten north wind of his native land—in that it winnowed all the chaff from his mind and left one clear thought. He would settle the

matter once and for all time. The face and form of an angel, and the heart of a Messalina!

He had known all along that some day she would turn up in Manila. It was impossible for them to resist the temptation to view their handiwork. Tigers, they always return to the kill. But he had her now, had her in the hollow of his hand. All the fear of her was gone. This afternoon he would teach her what the word meant. Civilians were lucky. These sordid things could pop up into their lives, even get into the papers, and shortly be forgotten. But in the navy it was the knell of advancement. It never mattered if the wrong was wholly on the other side; the result was the same. But he had her, thank God! The world would never know what had turned Bob Hallowell into a misanthrope. The tentacles of the octopus had been lopped off, as by a miracle. He was a free man.

Never would he forget the shame and misery, the horror of that night in the Grand Hotel in Yokohama. The brazenness of that confession—on the first night of his honeymoon! He was free, yes, but

he would never be able to blot out that infernal night. Well, he had her. She should leave Manila on the first ship that left port; it did not matter whether it went north or east. If she proved obdurate, he would have her arrested. He would fight her tooth and nail. The world had changed since that night. The old order had gone to smash since August, 1914. Traditions had been badly mauled by necessities. Such a scandal, in which he had been merely the dupe, would scarcely leave a ripple in passing. Who would care, these tremendous times?

He stopped abruptly. His thoughts had almost carried him past the hotel, one of those second-rate establishments which you find in all Oriental cities that are seaports, hotels full of tragic and sordid histories. He entered, ran up the first flight of stairs, scrutinized the numbers on two doors, and paused before the third. He raised his hand and struck the panel. A touch of vertigo seized him. Supposing his love for the Jezebel was still a living thing and needed only the sight of the woman to revive it?

"Come in!"

He opened the door and closed it behind him, standing with his back to it. He did not take off his hat. A cold little shudder ran over him. She was more beautiful than ever.

She rose from a dilapidated corduroy divan, pressed the coal of a cigarette into the ash-tray, and faced him, her air one of hesitance and timidity. What she saw was a squat muscular body, a beautiful head with a rugged, kindly face. She noted the hair, shot with silver. That was always a good sign. Still, there was something in the elevation of his jaw and the set of his powerful shoulders she did not like.

What he saw was a woman of medium height, slender but perfectly molded, young, beautiful, exquisite. Her hair was the color of spun molasses, lustrous because the color was genuine. Her eyes were velvety purple. The skin was milk-white, with a hint of peachblow under the eyes and temples. The marvel of her lay in the fact that she never had to make up. The devil had given her all those effectives for which most women strive in vain. Innocence! She might have stepped out of one of Bouguereau's masterpieces. At one cor-

ner of her mouth was the most charming mole imaginable. You might look at her nose, her eyes, the curve of her chin, but invariably your glance returned to the mole. The devil's finishing-touch; it permitted you to see the mouth indirectly, and you lost the salient—a certain grim, cruel hardness.

He waited with an ironical twist to one corner of his mouth. But in his heart there was great rejoicing. Aside from the initial chill—nothing, not a thrill, not a tingle at the roots of his hair. He could look upon her beauty without a single extra heart-beat. He was free, spiritually as well as legally.

"Well?" he said.

"I came to Manila, to you, because I am tired and repentant and want a home. I am growing old."

He laughed and rested his shoulders against the door. There was a repressed volcanic flash in her eyes. That laugh did not presage well.

"Is it so hard to forgive?" Vocal honey.

"What is it you really want?" he asked, perfectly willing to see the comedy to its end.

"A home . . . with you. I know, Robert, that I was a wretch in those days. But the world over here . . . men . . . the temptation . . . the primordial instinct of woman to fight man with any weapon she can lay a hand to! . . . Won't you take me back and forgive?"

"Take care, Berta! Don't waste those tears! In your eyes they are pearls without price. Don't waste them on me."

"Then you won't forgive?"

"Forgive? What manner of fool have you written me down? Forgive! I gave you an honest man's love . . . and you picked my pockets! I would not give two coppers to place on your dead eyes. Take you home? Innocent child!"

"Ah! Then it is war?"

"War to the end, pretty cobra! You don't suppose I came here with any other idea?"

How she hated this man! Hated him because she had never beaten him, never seen him cringe nor heard him plead. She, too, would remember that night in Yokohama, six years gone. After the blow, silence, not a word or a look. Stonily he had packed up his belongings and gone to the Yokohama Club, whence he had gone

aboard a cruiser in the morning. Since that moment until this she had never laid eyes on him. Every six months a check came; but even that lacked his signature—a draft from Cook's. War! So be it. He would learn when she began to turn the screws.

"You will take me home and acknowledge me," she whipped back at him.

"Acknowledge you . . . what?"

"As your wife!" stormily.

Again he laughed. "You are not my wife, and never have been."

"And how will you prove it?"

"That will be easy. Curious old world, isn't it? I thought, when I received your note, that nothing would satisfy me but to wring your neck. And all I want is a kiss . . . because I'm sure it would poison you! I know. You have in that head of yours schemes for my humiliation, scandal, and all that. A woman, known as The Yellow Typhoon, claiming to be the wife of one Robert Hallowell, rampaging the office, storming the villa gate, getting interviewed. No, Berta, it isn't going to happen at all. On the contrary, you will leave Manila on the first ship out."

"And if I refuse?"

"Bilibid prison. While we are very busy militarily, our civil courts have plenty of time to try a prime case of bigamy. War? You will jolly well find out!"

"Bigamy!"

"Sure. Lieutenant Graham is dead, and I had charge of his effects. I found some interesting letters. These led me to the Protestant Episcopal cathedral, where your name and his were neatly inscribed on the register . . . six months before you laid your trap for me. You found, after you had married him, that he wasn't the Graham who had inherited a fortune. Marriage! It seems to be a mania with you. How many of us poor devils have you rooked with your infernal beauty? What's God's idea, anyhow? Or is it the devil himself who fits you out, covers your black heart with alluring flesh? No matter. The first ship out or Bilibid. I have warned you."

Then he did something that he afterward regretted. But malice burned so hotly in his veins that he could not resist the impulse. He walked over to her and, before she could comprehend his purpose, swept her into his arms, held her tightly for a mo-

ment, and kissed her, her eyes, her lips, her throat. Then he flung her roughly back upon the divan, stalked from the room, and closed the door with an emphasis which proclaimed that it was to stand between them eternally. Once he reached the street, he spat and rubbed his lips energetically.

He had been a fool to do that. He had slipped down to her level. But, hang it! it was the only way he could make her feel anything, the viper!

A fool indeed; for later that act was going to cost him dearly.

He left behind a tableau. Not until his footsteps died away did the woman stir. Then she sprang to her feet, a fury. She swept her hand savagely across her mouth. She, too, spat.

"Oh!" she cried, through her teeth, in a kind of animal roar. She seized the divan pillow, tore at it, and sent it hurtling across the room. "Oh!"

"There, there! Enough of that, Berta!"

A man stepped from behind the screen. He was notable for three things, his bulk, his straw-colored hair, and the pleasant expression of his smooth, ruddy face. The ensemble was particularly agreeable. But

in detail, somehow, the man lost out. There wasn't enough skull at the back of his head, his eyes were too shallow, there was a bad droop to his nether lip. For all these defects, everything about the man suggested power—power never wastefully applied.

The woman whirled upon him. "But you!" her voice thick with passion. "You saw what he did?"

"Yes."

"And you let him go?"

"I have told you. If there is one man in Manila I do not care to meet, it's the captain."

"I despise you all!" She flew about the room, gesticulating.

"You will die of apoplexy some day, if you ever have the misfortune to grow fat. Enough of that nonsense. That goose is dead; but there are others, and larger golden eggs."

"But I hate him! I want him broken, disgraced! Didn't you hear him order me out of Manila?"

"Don't let that worry you. You'll stay here until I'm ready to leave. I'll hide you over in the Tondo."

"What! Among the natives?"

The man crossed the room and caught hold of her. "Be sensible. The captain will do exactly as he threatens. It's Bilibid if I don't hide you at once. You couldn't walk five blocks up the Escolta without running into some one who knows you. You left a trail across these diggings, my tiger-kitten. They don't call you The Yellow Typhoon for nothing. You've got to keep under cover, since we can't get you into that villa of his. These are war-times and I've big work to do. You'll go to Tondo because it is my will. I've let you play your game; now you'll help me play mine. When this job is done we'll return to the States and live like nabobs. I tell you, Berta, there's a fortune for the picking. Risks, yes; but not any more dangerous than we've been accustomed to. These American swine—"

"Hush!"

"All right." The man switched into Danish. "These American swine don't shoot spies; they arrest them and let them out on bail. Ye gods! But I say, I've got a little surprise for you. Remember those sables I smuggled in last spring? Well, Wu Fang is making them into a coat

that will be worth seven thousand in the States."

"Manchurian!" disdainfully.

"Real Russian." He smoothed her hair; but it was some time before she began to purr. "No nonsense. We'll clear out of here at once. I'll take you to the Tondo and you can rig up in that Chinese costume of yours. You can ride after sundown, and I'll be out frequently. I'll fix you up like the Sultan's favorite. You can wear a cap outside of doors. Inside, it won't matter if the natives see your hair."

"For how long?"

"Perhaps two weeks."

"Something of naval importance," she mused.

"So big that the fatherland will pay a million. One of the biggest things in the world, here in Manila; and it's packed away in the brain of that experimental husband of yours. That's why I wanted you out there. There is a blue-print at that villa. If I can't land the big goose, I can land that. If we can't apply the principle, we can learn what it is."

"And if he loses it, it will break him?"

"Something like that."

"Then I'll go peacefully into the Tondo. The thought of his being broken will keep me alive. Make him pay for those kisses!"

The man held her off at arm's-length. "You're a queer hawk. I don't suppose there's a man on earth you really care for. You're afraid of me; that's my hold."

"Afraid of you? No. You are generally sensible and necessary. And I happen to be your wife. You're a port in the storm."

"There seems to be only one idea in your head—to break men, twist their hearts and empty their pockets."

"I hate them. I have always hated them. As a child I fought the boys when they tried to kiss me. I was born that way. Analyze it? I've never tried to. Perhaps I am Nemesis for all the wrongs mankind has done womankind. I hate them. They never kiss me—even you—that I don't want to strike and cut."

"And you've been successful for one reason only."

"And what is that?"

"Naval officers, English and American, proud and inherently afraid of scandal. You may thank God you never tried your game on a man of my kidney. Your pretty neck

would have twisted long ago. Mark me, Berta, you are mine. Never try to play any of those tricks on me. If you do I'll kill you with bare hands. To you I am a reliable business partner; to me you're the one woman. Remember that. You hold me because you are always a bit of mystery. What's behind that day in San Francisco when you decided to cast your lot with mine? More than seven years gone, and I've never found out. Some man, and because he did not give you a square deal—all these wrecks."

"Do you want the truth? You are the first man who ever laid his hand on me. I ran away from a humdrum world. I wanted adventure, swift, red-blooded. I'm a viking's daughter."

"I can believe that. You don't care for money or jewels. It's the game, the sport. Typhoons! that's you. You come and go across men's lives exactly like a typhoon. Wherever you pass—wreckage. But our captain seems to have escaped."

"I have your promise in regard to him."

The man laughed. "That's one of your charms—you stick it out. What are you—German, Dane, Finn? To this day I don't

know. But always keep in your pretty head that you are mine. Marry them, kiss them, and say good-by; but always recollect that I'm under the latticed window. After all, it's just as well that you didn't go out to San Miguel. The captain has a partner. He'd have been too much for you."

"In what way?"

"Your way. Handsomest man in the Asiatic fleet, and rich. He's to be transferred shortly to the Atlantic. And if I've got the right of it, you and I are going to be very much interested in his journey."

"Rich and handsome," she said, ruminatingly.

The man smiled ironically. "An officer who has never had an affair; ice, where women are concerned. I dig up their histories; part of my game. You would have about as much chance with him as I would in a sampan in the middle of one of your happy-go-lucky typhoons. A handsome, vigorous young man, who carries a Rajputana parrakeet with him when he travels, a talking parrakeet. Everybody in Manila has heard about that bird."

"A handsome young man with money and a talking parrakeet!" The woman be-

gan to laugh. "I never heard anything like that before. I am interested. What's he look like?"

The man took out a wallet from which he drew a newspaper clipping. "That's a good likeness."

"He is handsome! . . . Good Heavens!"

"Well?"

"But this isn't his photograph. It's a crook's—'Black' Ellison, wanted for diamond robbery and assault in San Francisco."

"The two look enough alike to be useful . . . maybe. Not a physical likeness; it's merely photographic. I never overlook anything. If he takes the journey I have in mind, it may be of use. Photographically, they look enough alike to be twins."

The woman returned the clipping, her eyes somber. She walked slowly over to a window and stared down into the street—without seeing anything of the busy life below.

CHAPTER II

OUT San Miguel way there are many two-storied brick villas with Spanish-red tiles. Sometimes there are three or four almost neighborly, then one aloof and alone. In Manila most white folk live up-stairs, the servants down. It permits white folk to talk over their affairs without listeners—and the servants to run away to cock-fights as often as they dare.

One of these isolated villas was walled in, except on the river side, by a wall of rubble coated with whitewash. Rising above the *chevaux de frise* of broken bottles was a fringe of feathery bamboo. There was an alley of these trees from the gate to the door. There was also a garden; but the precise formality with which it had been laid out was a mute testimony of the absence of womankind.

Two Americans lived there—bachelors. One of them lived there continuously; the

other, whenever his ship was in port. They were officers in the United States navy. An odd pair, agreed official and social Manila; and after futile efforts to make friends with them, dismissed them. Odd, because bachelor officers who have incomes outside their pay are generally gay sailormen. Off duty, these two formed an association of hermits. They never went anywhere except officially, and avoided women as other men avoided the plague. One of them was woman-shy; the other hated them, it was said.

Captain Hallowell of the staff would in all probability never go to sea again, actively. An experiment had severely injured one of his eyes, though the defect was not noticeable..

Lieutenant-Commander Mathison was an officer of the line—a fighting sailor. They were as unlike physically as it is possible for two men to be.

Hallowell was the dreamer, the thinker. He was short, thick, rugged, and a trifle gray. His head and short beard were shot with silver, though his mustache was still black. There was something about him that reminded you of the gorilla. You

were likely to carry this idea in your head until you knew him; then you understood that he was in the same category as the St. Bernard—the gentlest and friendliest dog in the world until thoroughly aroused. They called him a woman-hater with some justice, though no one in official Manila ever learned the true facts, not even Mathison, who surmised that Hallowell had run afoul some worthless woman and had got past the reefs by a hair.

Mathison was the man of action. He was tall, slender, and handsome, with a smooth olive skin. This deep color gave conspicuity to his gray eyes, the whites of which were dazzling. Every line and turn of his face gave you the impression that by nature he was amiable in the extreme. Given cause, he could be as savage and relentless as the gorilla his friend resembled.

Woman-shy, they called him, because they could find no other suitable name for the puzzle. He was always courteous when, by those accidents of chance called official receptions, he found himself among women. But there was always a cold reserve the brightest eyes could not batter down. Rest assured, there were many feminine cam-

paigns. He was the combination of two things women prize highly, greedily or sentimentally—money and good looks.

What had the aspect of shyness was merely an idea, held to with surpassing resolution. I shall tell you about this idea later on. There are, here and there across this world, men like Mathison, who are neither mollycoddles nor sanctimonious nincompoops. They are not gregarious—the type from which explorers come, men who know how to live alone, to whom the most necessary and alluring thing in life is to overcome obstacles.

This resolution had toughened Mathison, morally and physically. Packed away in that lithe body of his was tremendous vitality. He was perfectly willing to be called woman-shy. Such a reputation was a considerable barricade. He was content to rest behind it. There had been battles, bitter conflicts. There are certain fires which hypnotize; one *must* reach out and touch them. I might say that this idea of his was always in a state of siege.

After this exposition, it sounds odd to remark that Mathison was as full of romance as a Chinese water-chestnut is of

starch; that his day-dreams were peopled with lovely women. He never saw a beautiful woman that he did not immediately clothe her in his colorful imagination. He rescued her from Chinese pirates, he was shipwrecked and cast away on a desert island with her, he tore her from the hands of brigands or the latticed window of some rajah's haremlik; and he always married her in the end. Everything in him inclined toward the companionship of women, and he had built a Chinese wall around this inclination.

Among men, however, he was companionable, witty, humorous, and full of sound common sense. But no one ever called him Jack, not even Hallowell, the best friend he had. He was always John or Mathison to his equals and superiors, and "sir" to his subordinates. Hallowell, however, had compromised on "Mat." And yet Mathison bubbled with personal magnetism.

You never get deeply into a naval officer's character by rubbing elbows with him in wardrooms or officers' clubs. If you want to know the real man, go down into the boiler-rooms, the gun-rooms, anywhere but the quarter-deck. The rough-necks will tell

you. They sometimes weigh you with a glance. Two things they require of you—absolute justice and firmness. That was Mathison to his men; and he always backed these attributes with a smiling eye. There was something in the snap of his voice that inclined men to obey him at once, without question; not that they were afraid of him, but that they knew he was right. In the navy—in all navies—there are underground wireless stations. A man's reputation travels from ship to ship, and when an officer is transferred the men try him out just to see if his crown is of tinsel or of gold.

A fighting-sailor with red blood, with a born gambler's interest in chance, winning or losing with a smile, as you shall see; thirty years of age, and no anchor to windward.

He never forgot anything. They said of him that he could hide his collar-button during a dream and go directly to it in the morning. Hallowell, however, was very absent-minded. Often he would go about the living-room in search of his pipe, in the end to find it dangling in his teeth. Or he would wash his face with his spectacles on and wonder what in thunderation ailed his sound eye.

Hallowell he, too, was full of romance—miracles in steel, visions which cast into shape huge fighting-machines, tremendous guns, flying torpedoes. He was, aside from his official duties, a successful inventor. Few of the grim floating forts of the navy were without certain devices of his. He had just completed plans which eventually were going to cause the German Admiralty a good deal of anxiety.

There were still two or three points he had not cleared up to his own satisfaction. The plans were absolutely complete as they stood; and he believed he saw a chance to reduce the complexity of certain phases; and he was hammering away at this problem after hours, often far into the night.

Mathison, Hallowell and Company (the Company being the Rajputana parrakeet); an odd pair of men, rather misunderstood, with few intimates, sharing a deep, abiding love, never spoken of, but tacitly understood. They were jocularly known as "The Two Orphans" and the villa as "The Orphanage," as both men were without immediate family ties.

Lately Hallowell had formed the habit of going to the Botanical Gardens for a

half-hour's ramble, between four and five. He had discovered that this mild exercise cleared his mind of all routine and left it free to creative musings. He tramped about the paths at a moderate gait, his hands behind his back, the tip of his short, gray-peppered beard projecting like a bowsprit over his collar. I doubt if during these pleasant peregrinations he ever saw anything but the white markings on blueprints. Half an hour to the minute, then he would shake off the spell, set his shoulders, and hurry away for the trolley to San Miguel.

Having delivered his ultimatum to the woman known as The Yellow Typhoon and having learned, on the following day, that she had left the hotel in the Escolta, all thought of her went out of his mind completely. It was an unhappy page turned down for good. But to-day, one week later, as he came out of his day-dreams, she popped into his head.

A wave of shame ran over him. He would never forgive himself for that violence. Not that he felt any pity toward the woman. The act had lowered himself eternally in his own eyes; the luster was gone from his self-esteem. He had kissed

another man's wife, not his own. And what was worse, she might interpret the act as a sign that he still cared for her and try to re-enter his life at some later day. Fool! A mad impulse to hurt her, and he had hurt only himself. Well, the damage was done; berating his folly would not wipe it off the slate.

Suddenly his sound eye lost its introspective look and became alert. Coming down the path toward him was a woman. She was dressed in pongee, a *sola-topee* on her head. Round this sun-helmet ran the folds of a gray veil which could be lowered or raised at will. At this moment the woman's face was clear. It was young and vividly beautiful. Her hair was a ruddy gold, like the tips of ripe wheat after rain. The sun, directly behind her, cast a golden nimbus on each side of her head. Her eyes were purple-blue, like wood-violets, and her skin was the tint of pale amber. She walked with a free stride of one who loved the air and sunshine. She saw Hallowell only after he had deliberately stepped in front of her, blocking the way.

Her mouth opened slightly and a vague bewilderment took the zest out of her face.

"Still in town, then?"

"Sir . . .!"

He interrupted with a laugh. "You're magnificent; I'll always grant you that. You should have gone on the stage. But I'm no longer to be fooled. The pearl is gone from the oyster, the juice from the orange; so why tarry, pretty blackmailer? I warned you to clear out, and I thought you'd have sense enough to do so. To-morrow morning I'll hunt for you; and if I find you I'll have you locked up. God knows how you women do it! Here you are straight out of perdition, with more beauty than ever. And innocence! That's the pitfall; your look of innocence. That's what draws us poor, trusting fools. Well, the night to clear out in. If I find you to-morrow I'll stamp on you as I would a cobra. The Yellow Typhoon! Some poor devil named you well. But you'll never break another white man, not in these parts. I apologize for those kisses. I forgot you weren't my wife. I'm giving you until morning."

Insolently he swung on his heel and marched down the path.

The woman remained exactly where he had left her, in the center of the path. Have

you ever seen a clean, upstanding flower suddenly beaten down by a squall of rain? Her bodily attitude resembled that, at least for a space. One hand went slowly to her eyes, then fell limply to her side. But soon she stiffened, and there were volcanic flashes in her eyes. As Hallowell vanished behind the clove-trees she turned. Near by she saw a marine and he was eying her curiously. Evidently he had witnessed the scene. She approached him.

What followed, the marine himself recounted at mess that night.

"I was amblin' along at a safe distance. My orders were t' keep ol' Pop Hallowell under eye s' long as he was in th' Gardens. Hennessy picks him up outside an' follows him until he gits safe on th' trolley. Well, he was goin' along, when down the path comes a lady. She walked as if she didn't know where she was goin', either. An' out steps Pop in front of her, like he was a gay bird with the ladies. Th' dame gives him th' haughty. But he comes back. Her mouth opens a little, but she don't make no move. I couldn't hear nothin', but Pop was layin' down some law or other, which he winds up with a bang on his palm, an'

marches off, with the lady starin' after him like I'd stare if I saw a flyin'-fish come int' th' mess port an' ask for whitebait.

"I kind o' thought I'd move on, when she pipes me an' comes over.

"'Who was that officer?' she asks me. Bo, believe me, she had all the little Marys an' Normas an' Paulines in th' movies laid away with the long-cruise eggs. Gee! You'll gimme th' ha-ha, but I on'y needed a look t' tell that she was *straight*.

"'Well,' I says, 'that's Captain Hallowell, miss,' I says.

"'Captain Hallowell,' she repeats after me. 'Where does he live?'

"'He has a villa out in San Miguel, on th' Pasig,' I says. 'He an' Lieutenant-Commander Mathison live there together.'

"'He's not married, then?'

"I laughs. 'No, lady. Both of 'em are gun-shy.' She looks puzzled an' I adds, 'They don't have nothin' t' do with the ladies, miss.'

"'Oh! Then he's th' inventor?'

"'That's him, miss.' Then I freezes up a bit, rememberin' orders. I'm t' report anybody who asks questions about ol' Pop. But I tumbles that she ain't no officer's

wife or nothin', an' I asks what he'd said to her.

"'He mistook me for some one else,' she says. So help me, if there's two like that in Manila, th' place is due t' go on th' blink in a week. Then she lowers th' veil an' goes off toward th' exit, me trailin'. Had t' find out where she was puttin' up. An' hang me if she doesn't go plump into that joint in th' Escolta where Murphy an' me was thrown out last month an' just missed restin' up in th' brig. Which shows that you can't dope a woman out by her looks."

The young woman—she was possibly twenty-six—eventually reached her room. Her maid welcomed her effusively.

"Sarah we must leave here at once. Pack."

"Another hotel before we sail?" cried the astonished maid.

"Yes. And until I give you further orders never speak my name. Always call me madame. Be on your guard about this. I'm very fond of you, and I've let you have your way often. It may be a matter of life and death. We shall dine here in the room. Have a carriage at the curb at six-thirty.

Fortunately our heavy luggage went on. When you pack the steamer-trunk, lay all the darker and heavier things on top. And the box of make-up where I can reach it handily. I have decided to grow old quickly. I understand, Sarah. You are becoming bewildered. No less so am I."

"Madame's nerves . . ."

"They happen to be steel now. Don't worry about me. Only, be sure always to obey me . . . if you love me!"

"If I love you! Oh, madame, a mother could not love her daughter more than I love you! You left America so gaily and happily to see this Orient. The sea voyage built you up. And then, that dreadful night in Shanghai. You came and woke me and clung to me all night, and you would not speak. And then it began. We move from one place to another, not like persons touring—like people who have done something wrong. And I know that you have done nothing wrong. Ah, madame, what *is* happening to us?"

"So strange a thing, Sarah, that your poor brain would not accept the facts if I told them. Be patient with me."

"Oh, madame, who would not be patient

with you? I am French; we know what the word gratitude means. Command me; I obey. But yes! Here is a cable for you, madame. I will go order the dinner and the carriage."

Her mistress took the cablegram absently. She was not at all excited over the receipt of it, for the simple reason she knew exactly what it would contain—a single word. *Hurry.* Once a week, often twice, this same distracted word. *Hurry.* It was always at Cook's or at the American Express. The poor man! He would soon be pulling his hair. When she heard the door close behind the maid, instinctively she picked out a channel 'twixt the bed and chairs and proceeded to navigate it back and forth.

The Yellow Typhoon! They called her that, strange men, in Yokohama, Tokio, Hong-Kong, Shanghai; and always with that air men use toward women of a certain type. Everything in her called out wildly for vengeance, reprisal; and she was bound tragically, inconceivably, like a dreamer in the mesh of some monstrous nightmare. . . . To stamp on her as he would a cobra, if he found her! Helpless; all she could do

to defend herself would be to move on, hide. That was what galled her; she could not retaliate. But one thing she could do—forestall, anticipate, nullify. And oh! she would do that with all the strength and cunning she possessed.

Horrible as it was, that meeting in the Gardens was fortunate. She now possessed hand hold. Hallowell, a naval inventor, living in a villa out in San Miguel, on the Pasig. Blue-prints. There was sense to all those broken sentences which had come through yonder door a few days gone. Danish words—her own blood-tongue! She had not seen the man, so she could not describe him. But his companion!

She stopped before the mirror and studied her face carefully. What an incredible thing it was! Mirrors, once so pleasant to gaze into, had now become chambers of horror. She no longer saw herself—she saw a grave open and the dead arise. After eight years! And to stumble upon the truth through the agency of strange men addressing her familiarly! The Yellow Typhoon! Drawn by instinct, repelled by intellect and breeding, she felt as if invisible wild horses were rending her

In that room there, within reach of her voice and hand! Whither had she gone, this ghost? Terror and cowardly fear had held her back from making her own presence known; and now it was too late. She had fallen asleep somewhere, back there in China, and hadn't yet waked up. That *must* be it! The Yellow Typhoon! And *she* had stumbled across the wrecks innocently—across an open grave which had never been filled! Berta, in the next room! Who, then, was in the grave in Greenwood? The malicious cruelty of it!

Very well. She would telephone this Captain Hallowell. She would warn him.

She became conscious of the unopened cablegram. She tore off the edge of the envelope. For a moment she thought there must be some mistake. Jargon. Then she awoke.

"Oh!" she cried. She ran over to her steamer-trunk and things flew about for a space. The result was a diary-book from the rear pages of which she took a folded square of tissue-paper. She sat down, cross-legged, and laid this square carefully upon a knee. Ten minutes later she had the message decoded.

Mathison. Hallowell's blue-prints. *Nippon Maru.* He may be followed. Sail with him. Keep in touch with Washington wireless. This is your chance.

She sprang up, found a match, and applied it to the cablegram, powdering the ashes. Alive! She was alive again. What she had stumbled upon disconnectedly was now made clear. Her chance! She had a great debt to pay, and here was the opportunity to pay it. Pay it she would, through fire and water. She would show them that there was one who could be grateful. Fame and riches and honor, she owed for these. She would pay the debt.

Singular thing! In these months of wandering in this bewildering maze of dark and yellow peoples no one had ever recognized her. And yet it wasn't so singular, if one thought it out. Her world was at home, busy with war.

She would telephone Hallowell at once and warn him that he was in danger. And the thought of him brought back the thought of Berta. The colossal irony! So be it. If Berta stood in her way, she would crush her, relentlessly, inexorably. And what was Berta? Only a wandering ghost,

a lie. A phantom men called The Yellow Typhoon.

Her telephone call, however, was not answered. There was no one, apparently, at the villa in San Miguel. She would have to drive out and leave a note. Either the captain or Mathison, his friend, would find it when he returned. She found a Tagalog boy with a tough Manchurian pony, and she went clattering away into the night. The dry monsoon carried the dust along with them.

Just about this time a man in civilian clothes, but with authority written distinctly on his tanned face, entered the hotel in the Escolta. The proprietor began obsequiously to dry-wash his hands.

"The Señor Morgan!"

"Where's Berta Nordstrom, the woman known as The Yellow Typhoon?"

"She?" A gesture. "She went away a week ago, señor."

"She is here now. She was seen to enter here a little after five."

"That is impossible."

"I say she did. Bring her down. She wore pongee and a white pith helmet."

"She? Oh, that was not the Nordstrom

woman. No one here has seen this woman's face. She wears a veil always, and dines in her room."

"Bring her down."

"But, señor, she left at six-thirty."

"What? Where did she go?"

"That I don't know."

"The devil! Any man with her?"

"No, señor. Shall I take you to her room?"

"No. She fooled you."

"That is not possible, for the two women were here at the same time. I can prove that, señor."

"I have seen the Nordstrom woman. The description of the woman in the pith helmet agrees absolutely."

"I cannot help that, señor. They were here at the same time, though they did not meet."

"All right. If I find you haven't told me the truth, we'll lock up the place. You are not very good Americans around here. Good night." Outside in the street Morgan of the Intelligence—who switched from uniform to mufti frequently—pushed back his hat, perplexed. "Two? Impossible! A trick. I'll set a man to watch. I'll quiz

that marine again. If he didn't describe the Nordstrom woman, I'll eat my hat!"

Could he have peered into one of the thousand huts of bamboo and nipa palm, in the Tondo, he might have been convinced of one thing—that there was still a thrill left in the dizzy old world for men even as *blasé* as himself. A woman, wearing the gay little costume of a high-caste Chinese woman, sat on a cushion, her legs curled under her. She was smoking a cigarette. From a brass bowl at one side of her rose faint spirals of smoke. Into this bowl she flicked the ash. There was a smile, inscrutable, on her lips—the smile particular to one god and one woman, Buddha and Mona Lisa. By and by she picked up a fresh cigarette; but she did not light it. She broke it in two. In fancy it was a man.

The little Tagalog serving-girl, squatting on the floor and blowing chaff from rice, could not keep her wondering gaze off this exquisite creature whose hair shone like the gold bangles on the ankles of the dancing-girls. There would be a good deal of chaff in that rice when the time came to cook it.

CHAPTER III

IMMEDIATELY after "chow" that night Mathison and Hallowell entered the living-room, filling their pipes. They were both smiling, each with the idea that he was bucking up the other. For they were at the parting of the ways, these two, and they might never meet again. At dinner they had talked of everything but that which was uppermost in their thoughts. In the center of the living-room was a long trencher-table—a slab of wonderful mahogany propped by enormous boles of Calcutta bamboo. One end was stacked with books and magazines. The blank space at the other end was Hallowell's pet abiding-place. Here, after the day's work was done, he would wrestle with his mechanical problems.

Hallowell fired his pipe and held out the flaming match toward Mathison, who managed to catch the last flicker.

They waited until Paolo, the Spanish servant, went below with the dishes. Of late they had become a little suspicious of the Spaniard. He loitered in the dining-room when there was no legitimate excuse.

"Well, you lucky son-of-a-gun," said Hallowell, "in a few weeks you'll be rampaging up the Main, with proper sea-boots on your feet and a drab terrier under them. Lord! how I wish I were thirty instead of forty-five! But I've walked my last bridge. This is my chart-room. Of course, if I wanted to pull a wire or two, I could get to Washington. But I've certain ideas about the navy, and I don't want them actually touched. In Washington a chap sees the seams of the service, wires, time-serving, and all that. But out here it's the fighting-machine. We can't all go potting subs, but some of us can make the potting easier."

Mathison put his hands on the other's shoulders. "Bob, you're the most lovable man God ever gave to another for a comrade. And I'm going to miss you like the devil. And more, I'm going to worry over you, you're such an infernally absent-minded dub."

"That's a gift, that. We absent-minded dubs are always too busy to waste time wailing. Lord! but this coming and going of yours has been pleasant to me! I know, sometimes I have been moody and grumpy; but I believe you always understood."

"Yes. A woman somewhere who wasn't worth it."

Hallowell nodded.

"And she's gone, vanished," went on Mathison.

"How do you figure that out?" asked Hallowell, curiously.

"For some days now you have been going about with a tune on your lips—airs from old light operas we went to in the happy days. I've never asked questions, I'm not going to now."

"A nightmare, and I've just waked up," said Hallowell, staring at the coal in his pipe. "It wasn't natural for me to gloom. I'm cheerful by nature, the same as you. I'd tell you the whole story if I thought it worth while. Women are all right. It was my misfortune to become interested in the wrong one. I wonder if Cunningham would come up and share the place with me?"

"That's odd! This very day I tapped

him on the subject and he's crazy to get out here."

"That's fine! Two years, and they've been the happiest I've ever known."

"God bless you, Bob! Remember, I made no pull for this."

"You poor lubber! The whole lot of us have been watching you eat your heart out. You had to go. And they had to send you. Saturday. It's a great adventure; an adventure the moment you step on board the *Nippon Maru* until you march up Fifth Avenue in the Peace Parade! Funny thing. You'll get through. Feel it; one of those old wives' hunches. Made all your plans?"

"Yes."

"How are you going to carry them?"

Mathison laughed. "Not even to you, Bob. But these little blue-prints of yours are going to Washington. Fire and water and poison gas won't stop me. This is going to be rather an unusual stunt. The moment I land in San Francisco I shall be under the friendly shadow of the greatest organization of its kind in the world—the Secret Service. When I step from the ship I shall wear a little green ribbon; from train to train I shall wear it. I sha'n't know

anything about it, but those boys will have their eyes upon me. Simple; can't fail. At any time, if I'm in trouble, all I've got to do is to set up a yodel and the trouble is eliminated. On the other hand, I'm going to stay snug in my cabin. I'm not going to stick my head out until I step from one train to another. On board the *Maru*, however, I've got to depend upon myself. The thing has got about, Bob. I don't mean my end of it. It's got about that you've done a big thing. I've a strong idea that I'm being watched."

"No doubt of it. You're the only intimate friend I have. Those damned Germans! They're as thick as flies in this town. And how the devil is a man to know? Swedes, Danes, Norwegians, Finns—Teutonic, all of them. But so long as their papers are correct we can't lay a hand on them."

"When will you have the extra stuff ready?"

"To-night. I'll have it all out on old No. 9 print. And you'll carry that along with you."

"Honestly, Bob, I'm worried about that print being here in the house. I don't trust

Paolo. He's Spanish; and while the European Spaniard has forgotten, the Philippine Spaniard still covertly hates us."

"Nonsense! No. 9 is utterly worthless without the key-print. But if anything *should* happen to me before you go, don't forget that little red book in the wall safe. Morgan of the Intelligence gave me those names. They'll be worth looking at. Suspects, too clever to handle."

"To hell with the Ki!" came raucously from the darkened dining-room.

The two men laughed.

"You'll be taking Malachi along with you?" asked Hallowell.

"Would you like him?"

"Like him? Why, God bless you, I'd be having you to talk to, with that bird around. He's a wonder. The way he picks up things is uncanny."

"He's yours."

"Honestly? Well, by George! That's mighty fine of you."

"He's served his turn. He amused me when I hadn't any one to talk to. He's yours as much as mine, anyhow. He talks for you as much as he does for me. Besides, the poor little begger hates the sea. If I

took him aboard the destroyer he'd break his neck trying to keep on his perch."

"That bucks me up a lot, Mat. I'm very fond of that parrakeet. Going out?"

"Tailor. I'm buying a cits. Best for me to travel incog. if I can. Last fitting. I'll be back."

"Fire and water and poison gas; you'll pull through."

"You bet I will! Think of the yarn-spinning when I'm off duty! I can tell the wondering gunners that I saw the beginning of the idea, that I know the old son-of-a-gun who invented it. Nine o'clock."

"I'll be here," replied Hallowell, "waiting for you. Though I may turn in any time later than nine. So long."

Mathison went down the path. Halfway to the gate he turned and stared at the lighted windows. He could see the shadow of Hallowell's huge shoulders on the curtain. The dear old stick-in-the-mud! What would he do without some one to watch over him? He strode on, closing the gate behind him with a musical clang.

His tailoring required more time than he had made allowance for; the Chinaman hadn't made the coat-sleeves quite short

enough. Thus, when he stepped off the trolley-car which bisected the street less than a quarter of a mile from the villa—a five minutes' walk, tonicky on glorious nights like this—it was nine-twenty by his wrist-watch.

He swung along with a jaunty stride, whistling the latest tune that had "come out," "Oh, boy, where do we go from here?" He felt like a butterfly that had just cut through its cocoon and found the world a pretty good place to live in. In two months' time he would have his drab little terrier under his sea-boots. But for the thought of leaving Bob behind, he would have been the happiest man on earth.

These cogitations came to an abrupt end. He stopped. A picture had flashed into range. A carriage, driven like mad, had swooped under an arc-light; and the vehicle was coming in his direction. A golden fog of dust rose up under the lamp. As there was another arc-light opposite to where he stood, Mathison decided to wait.

The carriage came thundering on. The driver was standing up. As it rattled past—on the two port wheels—Mathison had a glimpse of the passenger. A woman! And

she was holding on for dear life. He gathered one vague impression—that she was young.

"What the dickens is her hurry?" He drew his hand across his chin. "No boat or train at this hour. Drunken Tagalog, probably. Too late for me to do anything."

He continued on. He began whistling another tune. "Where's the girl for me?"

> "She may pass me by and never know
> She was the girl for me!"

When he reached the villa gate he looked up inquiringly. The incandescent lamp projecting from the keystone was out. Usually this burned until dawn. Mathison gave it a passing thought—wires burned out, probably—unlocked the gate and marched down the bamboo-lined path to the villa door. Here again he paused. No lights.

"I see. Beggar's gone to bed, and that rogue Paolo has sneaked off to a cock-fight. Bob ought to give him the boot."

He climbed the stairs silently and went to his room. He did not cross the center of the house to accomplish this; he merely followed the veranda corridor. He tossed his cap on the bureau, yawned luxuriously, for he was tired, and sat down on the edge of

the bed to take off his shoes; but he immediately ceased all movement. The parrakeet was talking — vulgar Hindustani and equally vulgar English.

"Mat, you lubber, where's my tobacco? *Chup!*" Which is Hindustani for "Stop your noise!"

Mathison stared, his expression one of puzzlement. Malachi never made a racket at night unless he was profoundly disturbed. What ailed the bird? And where the devil was Bob? He decided to investigate.

"Mat! . . . *Bahadur Sahib!* . . . *Chota Malachi!* . . . Bounder, take that ace out of your sleeve! . . . To hell with the Ki! . . . Mathison, Hallowell, and Company, and be damned to you! . . . Malachi!" in a singular kind of wail.

A word about this parrakeet. He was well known in Manila, at least among the younger officers in the navy and the army stationed there. Certain parrots and parrakeets talk fluently. The brain, about the size of your finger-tip, is memory in the concrete. Men of science are still pulling their beards over the talking parrot, but their phrases haven't fooled anybody; they are just as much in the dark as you and I. The birds are child-

like in some respects. You teach the feathered emeralds this or that; and then, some day, in trying to show them off, they confound you (and regale your company) by rattling the family skeleton. Like children, they store away a good many things not intended for their ears.

Malachi—I believe they named him after Mulvaney's elephant—had been taught many phrases which pass in wardrooms but are taboo in parlors. Only, Malachi did not know it. Why men teach birds to swear I don't know, unless it be that a ribald oath uttered by innocence in the absolute is a man's idea of humor. Malachi's masters had taught him to memorize the names of a few cronies who occasionally dropped in for poker or bridge: and there was always a hilarious uproar when the bird gravely and unexpectedly demanded that So-and-so drop the ace he was hiding in his sleeve.

But he had the habit of all talking parrots, big or little, of shutting up shop for hours at a stretch and not even a plantain or a plump mangosteen would tempt him to break his silence. A truculent little green bird, no bigger than a robin, but with the spirit of a disgruntled Bayard.

There were no doors up-stairs except to the cement shower. All the other doorways were hung with bead-and-bamboo curtains. Mathison parted the one which fell between the corridor and the dining-room. It tinkled mysteriously as it dropped behind him. Where was Bob? He listened. He could hear the parrakeet moving about in his cage. When agitated, Malachi had a way of pulling himself up to the swing and solemnly clambering down to the perch, repeating the maneuver over and over.

Mathison's glance trailed to the curtain between the dining-room and the living-room. A broad band of moonshine entered through one of the windows, broke against objects, splashed the lower fringe of the curtain, and ended in a magic pool on the grass matting.

It seemed to him as if every nerve and muscle in his body winced and pressed back. It was almost like a physical blow. It took a full minute for the vertigo to pass, and when it passed it left his tongue and lips dry, his throat hot.

In the center of that magic pool of moonshine was a hand, sinisterly inert.

CHAPTER IV

MATHISON fought nausea, terror; fought the paralysis gathering in his legs, and pushed through the curtain, feeling along the wall for the key-button to all the lights. He blinked a moment in the glare that followed. Then, whichever way he looked—havoc!

The long table, the stands and chairs overturned, the phonograph-record files empty and flung about, the glass in the bookcases shattered and the books in a helter-skelter, the top of the piano swept clear of Hallowell's antique bronzes, drawers out, papers and blue-prints scattered everywhere—and the quiet form of his friend on the floor!

"Bob?" cried Mathison, the anguish of that moment the greatest he had ever known. "Bob? . . . God in heaven!"

He knelt. Dead. The body was still warm. Fifteen or twenty minutes ago

Hallowell had been alive. . . . The length of a pair of coat-sleeves—an infinitesimal thing like that! Mathison strangled the great, heaving sob. A pair of coat-sleeves. . . . The irony of it! But for a trifle like that he would have been home in time, and this would never have happened. . . . Bob!

Slowly Mathison rose. The anguish, the tenderness, slowly left his handsome face. It became hard, a little older, and there flashed from his eyes a relentless fury. He neither cursed nor gesticulated; all his subsequent acts were quiet ones. He prowled about the room, his scrutiny that of a man who knew how to hunt for little things; but he found nothing which would indicate the identity of the assailants.

A foot or so beyond the Bokhara lay a small bronze elephant, one of Hallowell's paper-weights. Mathison did not touch it; he would never be able to touch that again.

Bob Hallowell, matey, straight and loyal and brave!—done to death in this fashion! Mathison leaned against the jamb of the door, his face in the crook of his elbow. The one human being he had loved in years—as men sometimes love each other! And while *he* had been fussing over the sleeves of a

civilian's coat, Bob had sobbed out his life on the floor there! It was not the end itself, it was the manner of the end that was so horrible. Bob, who had always prayed that he might die at sea!

Mathison flung his arm from his eyes. The woman in the white pith helmet! But immediately he dismissed this idea. There had been no woman here. Only three men or more could have beaten down Hallowell, who was tremendously strong and active. God, what a fight it had been! and in the end —probably as he was getting the best of it— some one had struck him down from behind. And he had crawled toward the dining-room; for there was a sinister trail across the grass matting. Dying, he had crawled toward the dining-room. Why?

In God's name why had he not let them search? The uselessness of it! He had thrown away his life to justify an instinct— the active resentment of a brave man against permitting alien hands to meddle with his belongings. Bob had always been without guile, moral resiliency; like a bulldog, he had never retreated, stepped back.

"Mat, you lubber, where's my tobacco? . . . Malachi!" Once more that singular wail.

Mathison shuddered. It was horrible to hear the bird scream these familiar words. All at once he was struck by an oddity. Malachi had never wailed his name like that before; whenever he uttered it he did so briskly and cockily. The sight of a blueprint, however, caused Mathison's thought to switch instantly into another channel.

No. 9! Now he understood why Bob had fought. Swiftly Mathison sifted the prints —old ones Hallowell had probably been mulling over. No. 9 was not among them. Still, to make sure, he opened the wall safe behind the piano. This was empty except for a small red book such as men use to carry addresses in. He restored the prints to their hiding-place, but he retained the book. No. 9, with all Hallowell's new annotations and computations, in the hands of the enemy! What if they had no key-print? What mattered it if they could not apply the principle, so long as they understood that this menace existed, of what it comprised?

"Damn them all into the blackest depth of hell—the low, murderous sneaks!"

Once more the militant sailor, he stepped to the telephone which was attached to the

wall and took down the receiver. He stared blankly into the black cup of the transmitter and slowly replaced the receiver on the hook. Wires cut, outside somewhere, and all official Manila to be notified at once of the double catastrophe! He would be obliged at once to run down to the governor's bungalow.

A sickening weakness swept over him again. He reached blindly around for a chair, righted it and sat down, with his head in his hands. He would have to get a good grip on himself before starting out. After a while he raised his head and kept his gaze upon the walls of the room, with strange detachment noted many of the curiosities which sailors pick up in Oriental ports, not for their intrinsic value, but for their associations. A good deal of it was junk, from a collector's point of view; but Mathison knew that there was not money enough in the world to buy a single blade, pistol, bird wing, butterfly, claw. He would keep them always.

It was dreadful to sit there, blinking and choking and trying *not* to look. It was almost as if the body cried out: "Look at me! Look at me!" A terribly compelling

attraction! Damn them! They had ransacked the room while Bob lay there sobbing out his life.

Air! The room was stifling him. He staggered out to the east veranda. Here he fell to pacing and gradually his strength returned.

"Malachi!" cried the parrakeet, but briskly now. The sound of one of his masters moving about reassured him; for these odd little ringnecks recognize their friends even as dogs recognize theirs.

But the living master no longer heeded. Up and down the veranda Mathison strode, his step now springy and noiseless. He was in full command of his faculties. From time to time he made gestures; they were catlike. To tear, bruise, rend! A cold berserker rage had taken possession of him, one of those upheavals of hate which, instead of blinding, clarify, the fires of which burn steadily until the end is attained. Only strong natures are capable of sustaining it. Mathison saw the future with astonishing clearness. An eye for an eye. a tooth for a tooth!

"Mat, you lubber, where's my tobacco?" called Malachi.

This time Mathison heard with comprehension. He paused, struck by a singularly bizarre thought. Malachi! Supposing that was it? Supposing Hallowell had called out to Malachi the name of the man? A chance shot in the dark that the bird might remember and repeat it?

This trend of cogitation was interrupted by a furious ringing of the gate bell.

The visitor proved to be Morgan of the Intelligence. He was out of breath from running.

"Anything wrong in these diggings?"

"Hallowell is dead," said Mathison, gravely.

"The devil! Murdered?"

"Yes."

"I knew it! I felt it in my bones. Always something on this order when she passes. And like a yokel, I let her slip through my fingers! . . . Hell!"

"No woman did this."

"Actually, no; potentially, yes."

"How did you learn anything was wrong? The telephone wire has been cut."

"She came along in a carriage. Stopped just as I was about to enter the governor's bungalow. Said she'd seen men fighting

here—shadows on the curtain. And I let her get away!"

"In a white pith helmet?" asked Mathison, with the first sign of eagerness he had shown.

"Yes. Been hunting all over town for her. You saw her, then?"

"Just as I left the trolley."

"Get a good look?"

"No. Light clothes and pith helmet gave me the impression that she might be young."

"Young," mused the Intelligence man, ironically. "Well, yes; young and beautiful and the innocent expression of a child, with the heart of a hell-cat. I pick up lots of odds and ends in my business, unofficial stuff. This female once tried to wreck Hallowell; and she never forgave him for having a spine."

"She?"

"Yes. Ever heard of a woman called The Yellow Typhoon?"

"No," said Mathison, after a moment.

"Well, perhaps a man like you wouldn't. But ask the gay lads from Yokohama to Shanghai, and they'll tell you Typhoon is a happy choice. . . . God's name, look at this

room! What a fight! . . . And I stood yawping while she ran away again! Well, she sha'n't get outside the Bay. You may lay to that. Now then, anything missing?"

"A blue-print, relative to the U-boat business."

"But I thought that completed and out of the way!"

"It is; but Bob had some ends to tighten up. . . . My God, Morgan, they struck him from behind! He was beating them off, and they struck him from behind!"

"Buck up, Mathison! You mustn't let this get you. There's a whale of a man's job in front of you. Uncle Sam's depending on you to get to Washington. Don't let this get to your nerves . . . Old Bob Hallowell! I'll round up the suspects. I'll crucify them, but some one will speak. How valuable was the print?"

"It will give them an idea of what they'll be up against, and that will rob the thing of fifty per cent. of its value. The surprise will be gone."

"I see. Bad business. They'll try to get East; Mexican wireless. Well, it will take a clever man or woman to slip through my net; and I'll settle it inside an hour.

I suppose they came by the river. We'll take a look-see there later. Remember this is ordinary burglary with murder. It won't do to let the public know that anything serious has happened to our war plans."

"My friend! . . . And he was so happy to have done something for his country!"

"But keep hold of yourself. Don't let this break you down. It's up to you to make Hallowell's plans good. Keep that in your head."

"The Yellow Typhoon.'

"That's the name. I'll describe her later. Where's your servant?"

"Out. . . . An eye for an eye!"

"That's the way to talk!" said Morgan, patting Mathison on the shoulder. "And nothing will hurt the Hun so much as your safe arrival in Washington. . . . Poor devil!" he added, under his breath.

CHAPTER V

MATHISON, his pipe dead in his teeth, leaned against the starboard rail and stared with unseeing eyes. It was Sunday, the first day out of Manila. The northeast trade was blowing briskly and the blue Pacific flashed and tumbled.

Loneliness. Never had he known anything like this before. A sudden inexplicable craving for crowds, talk, laughter . . . women! With Bob at his elbow, night after night, he hadn't been conscious of a void in his life. Woman. No doubt he was a madman, a kind of super-madman, to have held out as long as he had. Nerves. It was quite possible that the craving would subside and he would become normal, once his raw nerves had steadied down.

His errand was in jeopardy. He would soon need all of his cunning, all his strength, to pull through. He had set for himself something more than the mere rôle of a

secret messenger. He had buckled on the sword of Nemesis. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. He was letting his grief dig in too deeply. He must find some diversion shortly or he was done for.

He had had to fight Morgan bitterly to win his point. Morgan maintained that the arrival of the blue-print in Washington would be vengeance enough for any reasonable man. In the end, however, he had surrendered, reluctantly agreed not to disturb the passengers beyond careful scrutiny of their passports. But why had the taciturn Morgan chuckled, thwacked him jovially on the shoulder, and continued chuckling as he went down the gang-plank just before it was hauled aboard? Mathison was still mystified over this peculiar conduct.

Anyhow, one thing was off his mind. That long, thick manila envelope was in the purser's safe. It did not matter that the purser might still be cudgeling his brains as to the why and wherefore of the remarkable decorations on the face of that envelope for which the owner had not required a receipt of deposit.

There were twenty-one first-class passen-

gers and eighty steerage. Mathison had applied himself intensively to the memorization of the twelve descriptions in that little red book of Hallowell's. None of the first-class passengers tallied. It was conceivable that his enemies would keep under cover until they were ready to strike; and nowhere could they keep hidden so well as in the steerage, among the Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Russians.

They had found Paolo in the Pasig River, a hundred gold in his pocket, conclusive evidence of two things—that the servant had betrayed his master and had known too much for the safety of the men who had bribed him.

Mathison knocked the dottle from his pipe, turned toward the smoking-room, when he saw a book coming along the deck, flopping and bumping like a gull with a broken wing. He recovered it. Probably it belonged to some passenger aft the smoke-room. *The Life of the Bee:* Maeterlinck. There was nothing on the fly-leaf to indicate the ownership, however. He tucked it under his arm and walked aft.

In a steamer-chair between the port and

starboard projections of the deck-house was a woman. He recognized her as the old lady who occupied the cabin opposite to his on the main deck. A gray cashmere shawl was wrapped about her head and shoulders. The rest of her body was snug in the folds of a plaid rug. A wisp of gray hair, the sport of the wind, was fluttering, now across her forehead, now above the edge of the shawl. She wore a pair of mandarin spectacles with amber lenses. Mathison could not tell whether she was asleep or awake. Nevertheless he approached. The craving for companionship was not to be denied.

"I beg your pardon," he began, "but perhaps this book is yours. It came galloping around to starboard from this direction."

"Thank you. I saw it start on its journey, but I was too lazy to go after it." She held out her hand—concealed in a gray cotton glove—and he laid the book on it.

It did not occur to him then, but it did later, that the voice was singularly rich and full for one who appeared to be well along in the 'sixties. But he was not unaware of the fact that breeding and education may preserve the tonal quality of a voice through life.

"You ought to have a chair in a more comfortable place," he suggested; "out where the sun is."

"That's just my difficulty. The sun bothers my eyes, and I'm obliged to find nooks where it cannot reach me. We old folks have to be careful. Won't you sit down?"

He opened a chair and sat on the footrest, conscious of a vague exhilaration; it was the human look of her and the human sound of her voice.

"My name is Mathison."

"And mine is Chester—Mrs. Hattie M. Chester. My cabin is opposite yours. If a submarine should pop up, you'll promise to come for me?"

"I promise. But there won't be any subs over here except in dreams."

"Something to scare naughty children with. I see."

The hint of raillery convinced Mathison that there was a vigorous, fearless personality under the shawl and the rug. What a curious spot to select! Swinging gray shadows that passed and repassed, baffling scrutiny in a most amazing manner.

The conversation turned upon the war,

and here again she surprised him by her clear understanding of what was happening to the world.

"You've a son over in France?" he ventured.

"No, unfortunately. But if I had a thousand sons, I'd disown them one and all if they weren't over there. Once upon a time white men worshiped many gods. To-day where are they? To-morrow we shall laugh when one speaks of kings. The Teuton idea did not invade Belgium so much as it dug its own grave. . . . Oh, if I were a man!"

Mathison smiled—something he hadn't expected ever to do again! He asked her what she was doing alone in this part of the world. She had had a nervous breakdown in the spring, and her doctor had advised her to take a long sea voyage.

"And where else could I take a sea voyage? I always wanted to see India, China, Japan. I suppose you are going back to enlist?"

"No, I am going home to fight. I am already in the service."

"What arm?"

"The navy. I have been transferred to

the Atlantic," he admitted, frankly. "I'm to command a destroyer in British waters."

"Splendid! And you are traveling in mufti?"

"A special dispensation." He sought a safer channel. "You are rather brave, to tour this part of the world these days."

"Gray hairs go safely anywhere. Besides, I've a French maid who is something of a grenadier. I am not afraid of anything . . . except ghosts!"

This time Mathison laughed. He was positively enjoying himself. Then he recollected that he hadn't fed Malachi. He rose.

"I've a little parrakeet in the cabin, and I've forgotten to feed him."

"Does he talk?"

"In three languages—Hindustani, Spanish, and Yankee."

"Bring him up. One like those I saw in Agra, flying about in the ruined fort?"

"Yes; green, with a lemon collar. I'll bring him up this afternoon at tea."

"To-morrow morning. The sun is in this corner in the afternoon."

"You ought to walk."

"I shall . . . at night."

"I'll bring the bird up to-morrow, then."

"And thanks for returning the book."

This was the beginning of what may be written down as one of the most amazing situations ever devised by Fate. The woman behind those amber spectacles was young, and it was the youth of her that drew Mathison, though he was utterly unconscious of this fact—drew him morning after morning as the magnetic pole draws the needle of the compass.

By the time the ship reached Honolulu and went on his depression was a thing of memory; his nerves became normal; he was more alive than he had been in years. With all the cunning of her superb art she made her lure one of motherhood, so irresistible that he no longer bothered his head over her avoidance of sunlight or the fact that if he saw her at night it was by the port rail, her back to the moonshine. There was one clear thought regarding her: what a comrade she must have been to the man she once called husband! Whimsical, deeply learned, sound in philosophy, humorous, and unafraid: she made him think of his mother; and all the tenderness he had bottled up in his lonely heart these fourteen years went out to her. Lightly he fell into

the habit of calling her Mother, and in her turn she called him Boy.

For all the pleasure and satisfaction he found in this companionship, there was a line and he never crossed it. Of his own affairs he was remarkably reserved. Several times—merely as a test—she laid traps for him, but each time he evaded them. Morgan—to whom she had gone sensibly with a frank confession—had summed up this odd handsome young man: "He is likely to fool you. Under that amiable exterior there is a lot of blood and iron stuff. Always keep that in mind. Just now he is in a bad shape. Get him out of it. He's a bit of a mollycoddle where women are concerned, but among men he is an ace."

Had Mathison been of her world—a world to which she was returning gladly, though she had left it indifferently enough—he would soon have seen through her art, clever and vigilant as it was. She could not disguise the slender youthfulness of her foot. No hand sixty-odd years old could be so firmly fleshed. The gray glove hid nothing. But his guilelessness served to carry her over a rather shaky bridge.

On the third night out of Honolulu—it was near eleven—Mathison stood in the little shelter between one of the life-boats and the rail, whence he could look down into the waist, at the recumbent forms of the steerage passengers who were sleeping on deck. Night after night he had watched from this lookout; but moonlight and starlight had a way of dissolving and blotting out salients.

To-night, however, his persistence was rewarded. From the black rectangle of the companion door a Chinese woman, apparently of high caste, stepped forth. She stood poised for a moment, then trotted across to starboard and laid her arms on the broad teak rail. She wore a radiant jacket, full of gold thread which caught the moonshine and threw it back—a spider-web hung with dew. She was smoking a cigarette.

He knew China; and suddenly he sensed something wrong, and discovered the flaw. No Chinese woman, high or low, ever wore such a thing on her head. Mathison couldn't have named it; but a white woman would have had no difficulty. It was a dainty boudoir cap.

One of the recumbent forms on the deck rose slowly. A big man, with blouse, boots, and cap of the Russian soldier; the peak of the cap was drawn well down. He lounged over to the Chinese woman, and the two began to talk. Presently Mathison heard the woman laugh. It was unmistakably Occidental laughter.

So! For a long time Mathison stared, but he was too far away to gather an impression such as might count in the future. Sooner or later he would see the face of this Chinese woman who laughed—white. He would never forget Morgan's description of the woman called The Yellow Typhoon . . . the woman who had tried to break Bob Hallowell and might have been one of the contributing causes of his death. Old Bob! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth! Let them begin the play. He was ready.

He had reasoned, and with sound logic, that his enemies might not strike at all while crossing, to lull him into a false sense of security, so that once they stepped ashore they might find he had grown careless, overconfident. One thing, they would never be able to get into his cabin when he was out

of it. The night and day stewards—dependable Japs—had been liberally subsidized. One or the other was invariably on guard up to the hour Mathison turned in for the night. With the Manila envelope in the purser's safe, the human wall around his cabin, an attack would have small chance of success. No doubt they were already aware of his precautions.

On the night before making San Francisco, however, he was given an insight as to the patience and Machiavellian range of the Teuton forces opposing him. It was twelve when he turned in—an hour later than usual. As he came abreast his cabin companionway, he stopped, rocked to the bottom of his soul. The Japanese steward was plunging toward him at top speed. Mathison spread out his arms, but the little brown man dipped, eluded him, and flashed up the main companion.

Against the opposite side of the cabin companionway stood the gray lady . . . Malachi's cage hugged tightly to her bosom!

CHAPTER VI

WITH the blood pounding in his throat, Mathison rushed to her side. He saw that the lights were on in his cabin.

"Just a moment . . . until I get my breath!"

"The steward . . . ?"

"No, no! Ran out to identify the man, if possible. I'm afraid there's something deadly in your room."

"But Malachi!" The bird was huddled on the bottom of his cage, a bad sign.

Mathison dashed into the cabin, inhaled sharply, and his inhalation thrilled him. An unknown but pleasant odor tingled his nostrils. His glance roved quickly. On the floor, under the port, was a brown box, perforated. He seized it and tossed it through the port-hole, beyond the rail, into the sea. Then he stepped out into the companion.

"Come! . . . Outside, where the air moves.

. . . Malachi!" Mathison's voice broke. "Hurry!"

She followed him, still clutching the cage and wondering if he would remark her eyes, now without the baffling spectacles. He led her to a spot where the rail opened, took the cage from her, and set it on the deck. He sat down beside it, and she imitated him.

"The poor little bird!" she murmured. Was the wig on straight? She dared not put up her hand to feel.

Mathison stared at Malachi. He should have taken a cabin in the lower deck. Still, he couldn't understand how the port had been opened. He had kept it locked, despite the stuffiness. No matter. Inspection would solve that. Thought he had turned in. He had, until to-night, gone to the cabin regularly at eleven; and they had planned the stroke accordingly. Their only hope of entering the cabin was after midnight, when he was in it. He had liberally subsidized the two Jap stewards. Day and night the companion was guarded. But after midnight the companion was empty.

Clever. To stupefy him, to send him into a deep, artificial slumber, force his door and

ransack his belongings leisurely. He was confident the fume was innocuous beyond the sleep-producing effect. But Malachi . . . it would have been the death of Malachi.

He still clung to that idea. He had read of such things, but until now had never considered them in the light of facts. If Hallowell had called to Malachi, the little bird knew. But would he ever speak? Had he understood that one of his masters had been trying to tell him something?

Every morning for an hour Mathison had worked patiently to get the bird to speak; but, aside from grumbling in parrakeetese, Malachi refused to utter a word. All this confusion annoyed him. There was a strange swing to the world, now up, now down, now from side to side. It kept his temper, normally irascible, in a state of feverish vindictiveness. True, he would climb up Mathison's arm, nip his master's ear gently—the only way he had of expressing affection; but he was generally unhappy.

"I don't know why," said the gray lady, when Mathison's silence began to get upon her nerves, "but my first thought was of Malachi. I . . . you have told me so often how much you loved him."

"And you have probably saved him. In ten minutes he would have been dead."

Malachi turned slowly head-on to the wind. The beak was closed. This was a good sign.

"Malachi, old boy?"

The woman stifled the sob that rose in her throat. A strong, vigorous man, young, handsome beyond ordinary, all alone but for the little green bird. Why? What was the meaning of this self-imposed isolation? "A mollycoddle so far as women were concerned." Why, there was nothing about him to suggest bashfulness. She had not studied him through all these hours without learning that fundamentally he was light-hearted in temperament and tremendously interested in living. No woman in the background, for he was not cynical. And here he was, his sole companion a Hindustani parrakeet.

Mathison thrust a finger into the cage, and Malachi struck at it drunkenly.

"He'll come around. I can't thank you; I haven't the words. But it would have broken my heart if anything had happened to him. Won't you please tell me exactly what happened?"

She did not begin at once. She had to weigh her words. She must never let him suspect that, night after night, she never went to bed until she heard him enter his cabin. What a coil! He would never know who she was! To-morrow, after landing, the gray lady would vanish forever. Only a few months gone her existence had been joyous, if strenuous; and now there would be always at her side a shadow and a fear. She had stepped upon a whirligig, and perspectives were no longer clear. The horizon of the future was dark with complications. She dreaded New York, and she was honor-bound to return. Berta in New York? The kite in the dove-cote? Escapades which would become the talk of the town and which the public would naturally lay at *her* door. She shivered.

Yes, to-morrow she must vanish completely, even though she would always be close at hand, all the way across the continent. The Yellow Typhoon! Her heart swelled in bitterness. He would never know. Filled with the grim business of war, he would be rushing in and about Washington or the great naval yards. He would spend his leave in activities which

concerned his future. There would be only one chance in a thousand of his stumbling upon the truth and finding her. Ah, but if he should!

"I could not sleep," she began. "I left my door open and knelt on the lounge to watch the sea. I don't know how long I remained in that position. Suddenly I observed a man stealing along the rail. His face was in a complete shadow. I watched him. He stopped in front of your port-hole, then approached it. This looked so suspicious that I stepped into the companion. Your door was open the width of the hook, and I could see the port-hole clearly. I saw the glass swing inward. There was plenty of moonshine. I saw an arm reach into the port-hole and something was dangling at the end of the shadowy hand. Quickly I threw up the hook, opened your door, and turned on the lights. Saki, the steward, came running up. In a word I told him what had happened. There was a peculiar odor in the air. I caught up the cage and rushed out . . . just as you appeared."

"All my life I shall be grateful. I can't explain anything to you, much as I'd like to. You will never realize what your com-

panionship has done to buck me up. I came aboard very nearly a broken man."

"Boy, you don't have to confide." She laid a hand on his arm.

"I'm an odd duffer. They used to call me mollycoddle, back at Annapolis, until I had whipped half the class. And all the while I've been just as normal as the average man." There was a pause. "You know Kipling?"

"His books? Yes."

"Then you remember that yarn called 'Love o' Women'? My father . . . he was like that. Handsome and lovable and weak in fiber. He was also in the navy. For a hundred years we Mathisons have been in the army or navy. We had money. We were soldiers and sailors from choice. My father died when I was sixteen. He died terribly. He broke my mother's heart. But I knew nothing of that until after his burial. Then one day she called me to her. . . . I wish you could have seen and heard her. Tender and plucky and beautiful . . . and unafraid. She talked to me as fathers always should talk to their sons. Frankly and truthfully she drew life. I had the example of my father. She told

me that somewhere in the world there was a mate for me. Should I take her a clean heart or a muddy one? Should I know real happiness or should I choose a bed like my father's? I listened, dulled and appalled. Then she asked me to promise to go clean. There's a point. We Mathisons always keep our promises. It is the motto on the shield. But we never give our promises hastily. My mother knew that. My father had never made her any promises of reformation. He knew he would have kept them. She told me to fight it out, then come and tell her what I had chosen to do with my soul and body."

"And you promised!"

"Yes. And I've kept it. She died shortly after. The wild streak was in my blood. I've had to fight. I have sown my wild oats in work and adventure. This took away a good deal of the gregarious instinct. I have fought wild beasts on foot; I have explored poisonous swamps; I have climbed precipices—and always the thing tugged at me."

"And the dream-woman?"

"I'm afraid she's been a little too long in coming."

"But how would you know?"

"I'd know. I can't tell you how or why. Only, I shall know. Something will tell me. I wonder, am I a mollycoddle?"

"Boy," she said, pressing his arm, for she hadn't taken her hand away, "I did not believe that there was such a man in all this world. Why, you have won your Marne! . . . And she will come, this mate, for God is just. If I had a son, I'd want him like you. All mothers long for sons like you. . . . She will come!"

"She'll have to hurry," he replied, lightly. "I'm heading into the war zone. I may never come back." He laid his free hand on hers. "I wonder if I can make you understand what your kindness has done for me? When I came on board I was all but done for. I had just lost the one human being I loved. May I come and see you in New York?"

"I shall be waiting for you. You have my address."

Later, in her cabin, while sleepy Sarah brushed and aired the wavy coils of hair which had been confined all day beneath the hot wig, she turned with shining eyes—eyes like purple grapes in the rain.

"Sarah, am I beautiful?"

"Ah, madame, all the world . . ."

"Bother the world. What do *you* think?"

"I? Madame is more than beautiful. She is famous. She is good. She is worthy of a good man, of many healthy children."

Her mistress laughed. "Thanks, Sarah. That is all I wished to know."

"Will madame continue wearing this make-up?"

"I shall change it for another in the cab that takes us from the dock to the train to-morrow."

When the ship lay alongside her pier the following afternoon Mathison put in his buttonhole the bit of green ribbon. Then he rang for the steward, assigned the cage and one of the two kit-bags to his care, took the other himself, and went up on deck to bid Mrs. Chester good-by.

"Good-by," she said from behind a heavy veil. "You will not forget me?"

"Never in this world! I have your address. I'll dig up New York from one end to the other but I'll find you, little mother!"

"Take care of yourself. And please come and find me!" But she went down

the gang-plank with a queer, empty feeling in her heart. He might find *her*, but the gray lady would shortly vanish forever.

Had she been mothering him? Or had she been attracted from another angle? She had never met a man like this before, worldly in his understanding, handsome, virile, a man's man, but an utter child in the presence of a woman. Perhaps the attraction was its novelty. Hitherto she had looked upon men cynically. She was like one who had been chasing a mirage across the desert, to find a water-hole unexpectedly.

It had been so easy to deceive him. Her voice, the roundness of her body, the firmness of her hand and foot, these hadn't told him anything. How many times had she almost reached out to rumple his hair? Why hadn't she? Why did she want to? She carried this riddle with her for many days.

Mathison walked down the gang-plank into the vast shed. Almost at once a man approached him and handed him an envelope. He made off without a word. Mathison, without glancing at the envelope, stuffed it in his pocket and proceeded toward

the customs barrier. He passed this with little or no delay, got into a taxicab and was driven to the ferry. Over in Oakland he found the train made up, so he went into his compartment immediately. He put away the green ribbon and rang for the porter.

"Screens in the window," he said

"Yes, suh."

"I shall ring for you whenever I need you. Knock three times shortly on the door when you answer."

"Yes, suh."

"I shall have my meals in here. Always bring the waiter to the door yourself."

"Yes, suh," said the porter, the whites of his eyes growing.

"Follow these instructions and you will be ten dollars richer when we draw into Omaha. That will be all."

Mathison left the door wide open until the arrival of the conductor, when he produced the envelope he had so mysteriously received. It contained his tickets. After surrendering these, he closed and locked the door and took inventory. Imitation mahogany—steel. Above the little door in the lavatory was an electric fan. He discovered

that one of the windows went up easily. When his bunk was made up he would be able to reach the light and fan buttons without difficulty.

"Well, Malachi, old scout, this is America. How do you like it?"

Malachi teetered on his perch grouchily.

"I'm beginning to think that you're Irish—a Sinn-Feiner. You don't like anybody, anything, or anywhere. Poor little beggar! I wonder if you'll ever chatter again. I suppose I'd better break the news to you. When we get to New York I'm going to give you away. Yes, sir. To the dearest old lady a chap ever had the good fortune to meet. To have met a woman like that . . . when she was *young!* My luck! They call us idiotic Yankees, these Huns, Malachi; but we're going to fool them. Ever see a spider weave his web—and then wait for the fly to walk in? Wait and see!"

Mathison turned slowly and faced the rear partition. He stretched out his arms and curled his fingers sinisterly, his jaws set, a savage luster in his eyes.

"With these two hands, by God! . . . All right, Bob. Trust me to see it through."

But how was he going to secure that blue-

print—No. 9? He possessed the power to search every human being on this train. That would, if used, serve to recover the print; but it would set Messrs. the Flies winging to parts unknown the moment they suspected what was on foot. The long arm of the Secret Service at his beck and call, and he would not dare to use it! Beyond identifying himself to the watching agents by the display of the green ribbon, he would never dare call for help. His enemies would be in this train, probably in this very car: they would be on the same trains all the way to New York, whither he must draw them. Once there, he would not have much difficulty in recovering No. 9. But if they mailed it! If it entered their calculations to mail it!

How many against him? He would never know until the end. The Yellow Typhoon? Let the vipers beware! Morgan had described her minutely, but Mathison doubted he would recognize her unless she entered some extraordinary situation.

To live in this infernal bulkhead for days, eating, sleeping, reading—that would be the supreme test, that would prove whether the metal in him was iron-casting or forged

steel. Never to question the porters, to confuse his enemies by a grim silence, to force them into offensives out of sheer curiosity.

"We idiotic Yankees!"

That night as he lay in his berth—it was after one o'clock—solving mathematical problems which had to do with jumps between trains, he became conscious of a pleasant odor. He recognized it. Instantly he sat up and hauled away at the window. Next he brought over Malachi and lowered the covering of the cage. The cold night air came in at the rate of a gale. Then he remembered the fan. He groped for the button, and the fan began to hum. Still he could smell the fumes. Suddenly he laughed. It was the cold, tranquil laughter of a man who had lived among men. He pressed the porter's bell. If there was any one waiting in the corridor, he would have to move on. But if the porter did not arrive!

The porter, however, came almost at once. Mathison, holding his automatic behind his back, opened the door full wide.

"Any way of getting a cup of coffee?"

"No, suh."

"Sorry to have bothered you, then."

All Mathison wanted was an open door for a minute or two—a clearing draught. When he shut the door there was only a vague taint. Clever work. Not a lethal fume; neither his heart nor his lungs were troubled in the least. A sleep fume. There had been an almost irresistible desire to curl up and let the world go hang.

Malachi's feathers were ruffled, but he clung to his perch, his eyes beaming with their usual malignancy.

How had they gotten the fumes into the compartment? Forward there was no danger, as he was occupying No. 1. He went over every square inch of the base of the rear partition. In the corner under the berth—a difficult spot to get to—he found an oily thimbleful of steel filings. He drenched a towel and dammed the aperture. Compressed air had forced the fumes into the compartment. Evidently they were going to keep him awake nights!

So his friends were next door! Something to find that out. But what was the idea? They could not force that door without dynamite. Had they speculated upon his running out into the corridor?

Or was this the beginning of a series of night attacks to break him down physically and mentally? . . . To keep him awake until he threw caution to the winds! There were big storms forward; there would be delays. Very well; he would sleep afternoons and stand watch through the night. A man's job.

The next offensive came while they were crossing the Rockies. It had caliber. It convinced Mathison that he was dealing with a man of brains, a man who was not untrained in psycho-analysis. They ran afoul a tremendous storm in the mountains and became stalled for several hours because of a fallen snow-shed. It was near eleven o'clock when the porter came along and announced what had happened.

Though Mathison was sleeping as much as he could through the day, he undressed at night, propped himself up under the reading globe and studied navigation peculiar these days to British waters. Round about midnight he heard a pistol-shot, another, then a fusillade from opposite directions. He jumped out of his berth and got into some of his clothes—and sat down suddenly, grinning. Had he been

dressed they would have got him! What would be surer to call forth a fighting-man than the sound of shots in the night? They were going to keep him thinking fast. They wanted him out in the open.

Before the train reached Omaha—a day and a half late—Mathison began to feel the strain. Sleep in the afternoon is never energy-producing; a number of minutes pass into oblivion, that is all; body and brain stand still; they do not recuperate. Mathison, upon coming out of these naps, felt as if he had been playing cards for hours. He had to apply cold water to shake off the lethargy. He was full of confidence, however.

There wasn't any doubt at all that they were after his nerves. The door-knob rattled mysteriously during the small hours of the night. Whenever the train stopped there was clicking on the window-pane. But he never opened the door nor raised the window-curtain. The vantage was still on his side of the net. While he knew what they were attempting to do, they hadn't the least idea where their endeavors were getting them.

At Omaha passengers for Chicago would

be transferred to another train. Mathison was last to leave. He put the green ribbon in his buttonhole, picked up the kit-bag which contained the manila envelope, and sauntered forth. The freshness of the winter air and the joy of swinging his arms and legs freely!

The porter preceded him with the bag and Malachi. He did not hurry. He was among a dozen or so moving in the same direction. As he reached the platform of the new car two men broke away from the group and hurried off toward the gates. Negligible and unnoticed, unless you knew what it signified. On the lounge in his compartment—which was still No. 1—he discovered some novels and a bundle of the latest magazines. A present from the Secret Service. He would look through them all with particular care. There might be a message.

A point in passing. If Mathison was confusing his enemies he was also confusing the various chiefs of the Secret Service along the route. Here, the latter reasoned, was a man who temporarily possessed colossal power. Orders had come from Washington to obey him absolutely. He could

commandeer a car for himself, a diner, put operatives in the cars fore and aft, order the arrests of suspects, knock railway schedules galley-west; and to date he had issued but two orders—to engage No. 1 compartment on all trains and to have three taxicabs at the station in Chicago. And these orders had come from mid-Pacific by wireless. On the other hand, they appreciated the fact that if Mathison could make it on his own, so much the better. Still, they were puzzled.

There were three novels. As Mathison idly riffled the pages of one he saw a word underscored. He followed this clue, and at length came upon the message: "You understand your powers? Car straight to Washington if you order it." Mathison chuckled. If the Secret Service was baffled, what was going on in the minds of the men following him? He had determined from the start to send no wires. The green ribbon must suffice. Telegrams passing to and fro might create confusion, alarm the quarry.

There were two empty compartments on this car—4 and 5. Mathison had No. 1. No. 2 was occupied by a man with

straw-colored hair and a ruddy complexion and a woman with a charming mole at one corner of her mouth. In No. 3 were two men, playing canfield. In No. 6 there were two women.

Both women had entered the car heavily veiled—the woman in 6 and the woman in 2. Neither removed the veil until the conductor passed. From San Francisco to Omaha, all on the same car; and they would be on the same car from Omaha to Chicago. Mathison nor the woman in 2 had stepped outside their compartments until this transfer from one car to the other. But the woman in 6 walked the corridor at all hours of the day and night, her face hidden behind a thick gray veil. Her maid, however, brought all the meals to the compartment.

The blond man stood up and put a cigar between his teeth.

"Well, once more luck is with us. And yet I am vaguely puzzled."

"Over what?" snapped the woman with the mole, irritably.

"It is almost too easy"—scowling.

"The stupid Yankee pigs!"

"Not this one, Berta. We haven't got him clear in the open yet."

"Ah! Then you are beginning to doubt that superior efficiency of yours? . . . I'm tired. To keep me cooped up like this!"

"You may open your wings as wide as you please, once we are in New York."

"But if he goes on this way?"

"I have still some traps. There will be a little journey in Chicago between one station and the other. Who knows what may happen?"

"But why coop me up?"

"The hour may come when I shall need you. If he saw you it would not be possible. Did Hallowell have a photograph of you?"

"In his watch-case. But he destroyed it the night he left me." She frowned.

"Nevertheless, he must never see you. On board the ship it was your impatience that caused me to fail. We merely put him on his guard. The blue-prints were in the purser's safe, and his signature was *not* in the receipt-book. Have patience. No man is perfect. Patience often overcomes skill. Sooner or later the skilful man grows careless, or he forgets, or he comes to believe he is a godson of luck. And then, there is the lack of sleep. Somewhere along the route I'll find a weak spot."

"I hate all Yankees!"

"So do I, Berta. I hate them because some of them are not boasters. Have patience. A small city east of Chicago, a chief of police who likes newspaper notoriety. A couple of hours; we sha'n't need any more than that. New York!" jovially.

"Champagne and beefsteak!" she retorted, contemptuously.

"Well, and why not? Haven't I promised you all the dresses you can pack in two trunks? I haven't had a decent meal or a good cup of coffee since the war began."

"New York! . . . after all these years!"

"Bah! Who in the world will recognize you? We are a good many miles away from that gambling-house in the Honan Road. You're moody. You've missed the parade for nearly five weeks. You'd be all right if you could walk through the cars to the diner and have them gape in wonder at you. Somewhere between Chicago and Buffalo we'll use that crook scheme. Now I'm going in next door for a few rubbers at bridge."

She did not reply. She turned her face toward the window and stared out into the night. New York! What was the matter

with her that she did not blaze with pleasure at the thought of New York? Fifth Avenue, Broadway, the theaters, the brilliant restaurants, the shops—why did the thought of New York set a little chill in her heart? Were *they* alive or dead? In all these years she had not made the least effort to find out. New York . . . youth that had known nothing but poverty! With a repellent gesture she cast out these thoughts and picked up a fashion magazine.

In compartment 6, the young woman read a manuscript, while the elderly maid with the broad, stolid countenance of the Breton peasant, brushed the golden hair tenderly. By and by the manuscript fluttered to the floor. She knew it so absolutely, even after these months. She stared at the partition. She saw in fancy a window-curtain, forms swaying back and forth, then darkness. She would never be able to identify the men. She had cried and shaken the iron bars of the gate until her palms had peeled.

"Sarah, dear, am I tiring you out?"

"I love to brush your hair, madame."

"I mean the slaving I've set you to."

"No, madame. The only happiness I

know rests in serving madame faithfully. Besides, madame has told me that all this is for France; and that is enough for me, who am Breton."

"Then I am still beautiful to you?"

The maid smiled. "Madame, that handsome young man with the little green bird . . ."

"Well?"

"Madame is not offended?"

"No, Sarah. Speak on."

"Well, it would appear that madame—and madame knows that I am observing—no longer despises mankind."

"Oh, but *he* isn't a man, Sarah!"

"But yes, madame!"

"No. He is an anachronism—a half-god who has lost the way to Olympus."

"Ah! If madame is not interested?"—with a sigh of relief.

"Men! How well I know men! The sameness of them! What do they offer me? Orchids, hothouse grapes, jewels that I return. Never a flower that is free and wild. What is it I want, Sarah? Romance! A whirlwind, an avalanche, to sweep me up, to carry me off—berserker love! A man who'll take me if I'm what he wants, with-

out pursuing me in circles. I am a viking's daughter! This man? . . . We shall wait and see. Get me to bed. I am weary."

Meanwhile Mathison went through his magazines, taking in the pictures first. Then he fell upon a good story. It was illustrated by photographs, and one of the photographs made him forget the story. What was it? What was it that stirred in the back of his head at the sight of this bit of dramatized photography? He studied it near and afar, from this angle and that, but the lure remained tantalizingly beyond reach.

Fate never hurries. She takes time in writing her human scenarios; she can afford to. She knows that inexorably they will be enacted, without deviation. She had chosen this moment to place before Mathison's eye the photograph of a beautiful young woman.

The train from Omaha arrived in Chicago exactly twenty-four hours late. Great storms were raging across the land.

As Mathison was passing through the gate—the green ribbon in his buttonhole—a man approached him covertly and thrust an envelope into his hand. More tickets.

Mathison did not accelerate his stride in the least. He knew that everything was prepared for him. Upon reaching the cab-stand he stopped. At once three taxis rolled up. Mathison bundled his luggage into the middle cab, rested Malachi's cage on his knees, shouted an order, and the three cabs started off rapidly.

The snow was coming down in thick sheets. A blizzard was in the offing.

Just outside the regular cab-stand stood a private car, a heavy, powerful limousine. As the three taxis rolled away into the storm a man dashed up to the limousine, jumped in and called to the chauffeur:

"The middle car; follow that. Smash it or tip it over. In a storm like this accidents will happen."

The limousine shot forward. The going was heavy. The man in the limousine saw the three taxis string out a little as they went on. What he did not see was the fourth taxi which followed him.

Almost in a kind of military maneuver the three taxis forward veered together suddenly and shot down a side-street. It took the limousine two minutes to pick them up again. There were plenty of arc-

lights, and by the aid of these the pursuer saw that he had gained a little. They were strung out again, about fifteen feet apart. They held this formation for several blocks.

To the occupant of the limousine this was baffling as well as maddening. He saw that until they separated it would be impossible to ram the middle taxi. He decided to draw up broadside.

The woman in the fourth taxi laughed.

"Sarah, that young man knows how to take care of himself. If I should happen to fire a pistol, you promise not to scream?"

"Yes, madame."

The young woman laughed again. "Oh, this is glorious! I feel all my youth coming back. I'm alive! alive! alive! The fates have appointed me his godmother, Sarah. My duty is to watch over him until . . . he grows up!"

The maid smiled in the dark.

Presently the man in the limousine cried out joyfully. The forward cab swooped north, the rear one south, while the middle car continued east toward the railway station.

"Now! Beat into it! Anything to stop it!"

A block farther on the private car and the taxi collided. The latter reeled toward the curb and stopped.

CHAPTER VII

AS the man in the limousine jumped out his chauffeur pointed his hand menacingly at the chauffeur on the taxicab seat. That individual raised his arms without resistance. He could not see the gun, but he knew it was there.

The man with the straw-colored hair swung open the door of the taxicab ferociously—to find the cab empty. He whirled back into the limousine, which was already moving. The right mud-guard was badly crumpled.

"Station—all the power you've got!"

Tricked. He understood what had happened. When the taxis had maneuvered into the side-street the original middle car had gone either to the front or to the rear. There was nothing for it but to play his last card—mistaken identity. To get Mathison away from his luggage for an hour or two.

The occupant of the fourth taxi, also comprehending what had taken place,

picked up the speaking-tube and ordered full speed ahead.

"Sarah, this young man will bear watching. He has ideas. I doubt if I shall be necessary to him at all."

"If madame should be hurt . . ."

"No bridges until we come to them. Keep your veil down. He might be watching from his car-window when we arrive. He must never see you."

Mathison was extremely pleased with the result of his exploit. To have thought out all these moves in mid-Pacific, and to find them moving without a hitch! He closed the door of his compartment and drew the window-curtains. He pulled down the covering of Malachi's cage.

"Malachi, you're likely to think cross-eyed all the rest of your days. But tomorrow night at this time you'll have peace and quiet."

Then, from the corner of his eye, he saw a bit of paper come jerkily under the door. He pounced upon it.

All compartments 2 on train bought out in advance; unknown persons. Want anything done about it? Answer window.

After a minute's wait Mathison raised the curtain a little and gave a negative sign with his hand. Then he dropped upon the lounge. So that's how it had happened! Luck and accident in San Francisco because travel East had been light, but a matter of foresight and calculation in Omaha and Chicago. Confident that he would always occupy No. 1, that he would travel a given route as rapidly as transportation facilities permitted, they had bought out No. 2 compartments on both trains.

There would be real action from now on. They would begin to realize that they hadn't any time to lose. Very well; they would find him ready. He smiled. The Secret Service agents were beginning to fidget, the best possible proof that his plans were moving forward like clockwork. To-morrow night the climax! Only a few more strands and the web would be complete.

"We idiotic Yankees!"

He went to bed early. He was confident that there would be no more gas. He was dead for the need of a few hours of recuperative sleep. The jolting ride across town had helped to dissipate most of the bodily numbness; but now his brain was crying

out for oblivion. He fell asleep almost instantly.

And yet a cessation of movement brought him out of this profound slumber. It was as if his subconsciousness had stood on guard. He peered out from the side of the curtain. They were in a railway yard somewhere. Stalled. Freights were all about and yard engines puffing and whistling. He looked at his watch. Two. He had slept four hours. He resisted the intense craving to bury his head in the pillow again. No doubt he had been refreshed actually, but he was still drunk for the want of sleep. He slipped out of his berth, drenched a towel and slapped it over his face. Then he turned on the lights and dressed. When the right time came he would sleep forty hours.

The train went on at four. At dawn it came to a standstill again and did not stir until nine. They were on a side-track, and along the main line freight was roaring and thundering. What was happening to the world? A limited, one of the fastest known, side-tracked for freight! From six until nine the freight rolled by.

A newspaper! It was almost unbeliev-

able. He felt rather stunned. He hadn't held a newspaper in his hands since leaving Honolulu! He did not actually know whether the Germans were in Paris or the Allies in Berlin. So held by the chase across the continent, giving his every thought to the affair, he had forgotten that the world was going on outside this particular orbit and great events were toward.

Twice again that day there were long delays at sidings, east of towns barely mentioned on the map. All the freight in America seemed to be moving east. On schedule time the train should be passing through central New York; and here they were, miles and miles west of Buffalo, the next real stop. The reporter brought him a sporting page from one Chicago newspaper and the editorial page from another. He was vaguely able to learn that nothing new had happened Over There, and that there was a coal famine and a great congestion at ports for lack of ships.

He began to fuss and fume and fret. He endeavored a thousand times to find a fresh angle for his weary shoulders. It couldn't be done. Pullmans were built for dividends, not comfort.

He wore a gray traveling-suit and a cap to match. The suit, though new, was in an astonishingly disreputable state. The solution is apparent; it does not signify carelessness. The fact is that you cannot loll and twist and curl up and at the same time keep the warp and woof of Scotch worsteds shipshape.

He yawned, stretched his arms until the sockets cracked, turned wrathfully and struck the top of the seat—that rolling lopover which is still one of the mysteries of modern times. Perhaps, in making the original car there had been a few yards of plush and excelsior left over. Splendid! Just enough for a pillow on the top of the seat-back, where no human head might reach it reposefully.

Mathison jumped to his feet and went through a bit of setting-up exercise. It was wasted effort. When a man is bored to the point where his soul aches along with his body, what he needs is a mental jolt, not a quickening of his respiratory organs. Nothing except that which attacks the eye surprisingly will serve to pull a man out of the bog of such lethargy.

Within the compartment, a pressed-steel

imitation red mahogany, green plush, and a bluish haze which was the essence of many incinerated cigars and consumed pipes; outside, snow, thick and dusty and impenetrable. A great rimless, earthless, skyless world. But for the clatter of wheel upon rail, the train might have been speeding through the clouds; the illusion was almost perfect. Darkness was falling. Winter! After all these years of tropical climes!

The confinement was really heartbreaking. Never had he been shut up like this. And the craving for sleep was becoming a menace. It wouldn't have been so bad had he dared move about freely, eat his meals in the diner, and smoke his cigar or pipe among men.

On the opposite seat were the magazines which had been given him in Omaha. He reached for one of them. He had long since read all the stories and advertisements. Whenever monotony reached that point where it threatened to become insupportable he dove for these magazines. He could keep himself awake with them.

Odd, but he was always returning to that posed photograph. It haunted him: a

wonderful bit of photography. Rembrandt in tone. It was a restaurant scene. The woman's arms and shoulders were lovely, but her face was a leaden silhouette, tantalizing, until you chanced to look into the wall mirror at the far side of her. Even this reflection was dim; but you caught the beauty of the outline, the quiet strength of the nose and chin; a rare face, not only beautiful, but intellectual. For a long time Mathison stared at it; and then he discovered something he had missed in previous scrutinies. In the lower right-hand corner, in very small type, he read, "Posed by Norma Farrington." Some new actress. As for that, many new ones had come and gone since he had visited New York. He tore out the picture. He couldn't have told why. Norma Farrington. He smiled.

An idea had come to him, a charming idea such as often tickles the imagination of young men when they see the portrait of a beautiful woman. The more he mulled over the idea the more fascinating it became. Certainly she would not have him arrested for wanting to meet her. He folded the picture and put it away. Supposing he really started out upon such an adventure

in earnest, not in imagination? Danger? Scarcely, with the little time he had at his disposal. Soon he would be in the waters that were full of slinking death. And it was this fact that let down the bars to the spirit of recklessness. A few hours of sport before the death grapple. *Why not? Why not? Why not?* pulsed his father's blood. No. He was John Mathison's master. Wild blood he might have in his veins, but it was also the blood of unbroken promises.

What had started this rather sinister idea in his mind, or rather reawakened it? The photograph of the actress? No. The gray lady. The charm of her companionship, the hint of the things he had missed. Queer things, human beings!

No, he would not bother Norma Farrington. He would build one of his exciting romances around her and let it go at that. But he would hunt up Mrs. Chester before his leave was over, have tea with her, present her with Malachi, and tell her the story in detail.

Another human inconsistency. Hallowell had become strangely remote. As though the thing had happened months instead of days ago. And yet every move he made

was in the service of Bob—to bring his great dream to fulfilment and confusion to his enemies.

He heard some one knocking on the door. He rose quickly and stood listening. Two taps, a pause, followed by two more taps. Mathison released the lock, and with his foot ready and his shoulders hunched he drew back the door about an inch. He saw the shining black face of the porter.

"What is it?"

"Bad news, suh."

"Come along inside." The porter slipped through the opening, and he winced as he heard the door close and the lock snap. "What's the trouble?"

"Dey's a big freight wreck beyon' de nex' town, an' we'se t' be stalled ontil mo'nin', suh."

"What!" explosively.

"Yes, suh. Freight ovah de passenjah rails. An' den dey's dat new rule—coal an' freight fust. We can't get by dat wreck onless dey side-tracks de freight; an' de freight goes whoozin' by while we twiddle thumbs. It's dat Gahfield awdah; an' dey ain't no use buckin' ag'in' it, wah-times. Dey takes the diner off, too. No fish. So

yo' will haff t' eat in de station aw go t' one o' de hotels in town."

"How big a town is this?"

"Middlin'; but dey's got a fine hotel called de Watkins, jus' a little ways f'm de station. Bath in all de rooms, suh."

"Bath in all the rooms," repeated Mathison, meditatively.

"I can bring yo' sumpin' in," suggested the porter, but without much enthusiasm. "Dey won't be no trimmin's like yo'd get at de hotel."

"How long will we be stalled?"

"Dey calc'lates ontil nine in de mo'nin', suh."

"What are the other passengers going to do?"

"Dey's all climbin' out fo' dinnuh."

Mathison pulled at his lip. His decision came in a flash, one of that caliber which only true adventurers dare make. The blind Madonna of the Pagan, Chance! With a wave of the hand, to consign the burden to her! Perhaps it was the green plush, the red paint on the four steel walls; anyhow, he decided to spend the night at the hotel. He would immediately deposit the manila envelope and the little red book

—Hallowell's—in the hotel safe and advise New York by wire his positive whereabouts. If anything happened to him, they would know where to find his personal effects. There would be no Secret Service operatives at his beck and call here; he would be on his own.

This decision reacted upon him mentally and physically like champagne. All his craving for sleep, all his depression, went by the board magically. He began to thrill and bubble with gaiety. And there would be Malachi. In the quiet of the hotel room he might be inveigled into talking.

"All right, George; I'll climb out, too. The Lord help me, but I can't stand this damned green plush any longer! I'll spend the night at your Watkins. Now listen. When the train stops wait half an hour before you come for my kit-bags. Engage a taxi. If you can get me into that taxi without being observed, there'll be a five-spot for you. You didn't tell the waiter this morning about knocking. When I finally got the meal it was cold."

"I done fo'got. I sure is busy dis trip."

"Will you be aboard all night?"

"Yes, suh. I ain't allowed to leave in a

case like dis. Dey won't nobody see yo' in all dis rampagin' snow. All right; thutty minutes aftuh de train stops."

The porter backed out. Almost instantly he heard the lock snap into the socket. He scratched his woolly poll ruminatingly.

"Well, suttinly dis niggah nevah struck a bunch like dis befo'. Two women hidin' behin' veils w'en I makes up de beds—like dey jes' got ovah smallpox. An' dis chap makin' me signal on de do', an' totin' a parrot! Well, politeness is mah middle name. I'se goin' t' do jes' es dey tells me. W'en I gits t' New York I'll buy dat Ford Lizzie."

In the fourth compartment sat three men, playing cutthroat auction. One of them had just bid "two without" when the porter knocked.

"Come in!" shouted the blond man. "Ah, George, what's the news?"

The porter became a very mysterious individual. He shut the door softly and leaned toward the blond man's ear.

"He's goin' int' town, suh."

"Going to take his things with him?"

"Yes, suh. I'm t' call fo' him thutty minutes aftuh de train stops. Dey's sum-

pin' I fo'got t' tell yo', suh. It's de way I has t' knock on his do' befo' I can git in. I hits two times, den I waits a moment, den I hits two times mo'."

One of the men started to say something angrily, but the blond man silenced him with a gesture.

"You should have told me that before, George," reproachfully.

"I know, suh; but I done fo'got."

"Remember my instructions. A misstep on your part and you land in jail."

"Yes, suh." For George knew these men to be Secret Service men. He had seen the magic shields. "Dey sure fools yo' sometimes, don't dey? He don't look it."

"That's why I'm taking all these precautions. I can't arrest him until we cross the New York state line. The less they look like it the more dangerous they are. Always remember that, George. He hasn't ordered anything to drink, has he?"

"No, suh; nuthin' but watah an' coffee."

"He hasn't sent or received any telegrams?"

"No, suh."

"What made him decide to risk leaving the car?"

George thought for a moment. "I reckons it was de green plush. He said he couldn't stand it any longer."

The blond man laughed. "Plush! Well, I'd risk it myself if I were in his boots. That's all, George."

The porter bobbed and went away. The moment the door closed the blond man got up.

"Out in the open at last! All things come to him who waits. Sleep. That's what he is after. Since the fumes I'll wager he has kept an eye open every night; and it's beginning to tell on him. Everything is turning out beautifully: the wreck, the storm, his restlessness."

"If that black fool had only told us about that knocking!"

"Never mind the spilled milk. We all know what to do; let us see that we do it. I'll notify the local police at once. This may be the end of the chase. This porter is telling us the truth. I believe now that the other porter told the truth. Mathison isn't relying upon anybody to help him out. He hasn't sent any telegrams or received any. At least, not from his own car. It may be . . . No; he never leaves the com-

partment. Yet there's those three taxis. How could these turn up if he hadn't telegraphed? Never mind. Here is where we shall trip him up. I'll go and tell Berta."

Shortly after he rapped on the door of the second compartment. The door was opened cautiously.

"Oh!" said the woman with the mole.

The blond man stepped inside. "Good news! He's going into this town for the night. There's a wreck ahead, and we'll be stalled all night. He's going to risk it in the open at last. Sleep. He's going to pieces for the want of it. Out in the open!"

"It is time. I am dead. I'll never get the cramp out of my poor body. Nearly three thousand miles cooped up like this! You were free. I had to stay packed away in this suffocating box." She stooped and peered out of the window. The suburb lights were flashing by. "A horrible night!"

"On the contrary, I should call it beautiful. We are and have been perfectly prepared against a move like this. He carries two things I must have."

"I shall be glad when it's over."

"To-night. It will depend upon you. Be careful. He is very strong and clever.

I thought the chase would be over in Chicago last night. He tricked me neatly. But green plush!" The blond man laughed quietly.

"What are you laughing at?"

"He's going into this town, he's going to trust to his luck, because he can't stand the sight of green plush any longer. It's acting upon him psychologically, like red upon the fighting toro. On the other hand, he will not act impulsively again."

"He hasn't gone yet."

"A fig for that! He'll go with the police, then. His way or mine; he'll go into town to-night. Dress warmly but elegantly. Look the part."

Mathison put on a fresh collar and brushed himself carefully. He packed his kit-bags and patted them affectionately, as a hunter might have patted his faithful hounds. A real dinner, lights, cheerfulness, pretty women; a room big enough to turn around in, a bed big enough to turn over in, and a bathroom with a tub of hot water; a theater, perhaps, drama, opera, burlesque, whatever the town had to offer. He would play the game to the hilt. His danger would be maximum, whether he

stayed in the hotel or walked abroad. So he might as well get all the fun out of it possible.

He lifted the cotton-flannel bag. "Malachi, we'll both have a bath to-night. Only, we're probably doing a fool thing. There won't be any one to watch over us; we'll have to go it on our own. But I'm done. I've *got* to get outside. You poor little beggar! Are you ever going to talk again? Malachi!"

A pair of yellow eyes flashed belligerently, but immediately the lids dropped.

Perhaps if the bird had the run of a room where everything was silent and motionless, he might find his tongue. For days he had known nothing but the strange swing of the sea and the rattle of steel. A quiet room in which he could wander about and claw up the curtains.

CHAPTER VIII

AT precisely six-thirty the porter returned. He announced his arrival in the peculiar manner previously described.

"De taxi is waitin' fo' yo', suh," he whispered.

"Good for you, George. Some snowstorm!"

"It sure is. Yo' can't see yo' hand befo' yo' face. I tol' de cabby t' take yo' straight t' de Watkins. On'y a sho't ways. De Watkins is fash'nable an' has a cobbyray—leastwise dey did befo' we got int' dis wah. Anyhow, dey'll give yo' all de comfo'ts o' home, an' I reckon dey's whut's achin' yo'."

"The nail on the head, George. But I mustn't miss this train. Remember that."

"I'll telephone, suh, ef dey makes up any time."

Passenger and porter hurried from the car to the station platform, crossed two

tracks, passed through the waiting-room, thence to the street, which you could not see across for the curtain of driving snow. There was a line of taxis at the curb. It appeared that everybody had deserted the train.

Mathison knew that he had committed a blunder. There was even now a chance to run back; but stubbornly he faced the direction toward which he had set his foot. A blunder which, before the night was over, might become a catastrophe. Well, one thing was certain: they should never lay hands upon that manila envelope. He would deposit it in the hotel safe. Once that was done, they could come at him from all directions, if they cared to. He knew exactly every move he was going to make.

"Boss, I wish I was whah dese bags come f'm. Pineapples an' melons; oh, boy! Say, I ain't nachelly inquis'tive, but what's in dat cage?"

"A ghost, George, by the name of *Palæornis torquatus*."

"I pass!"

Mathison laughed. "It's a parrakeet, a hop-o'-my-thumb of a bird."

"Talk?"

"Almost as much as you do, George."

The porter grinned and helped stow the luggage inside the cab. Mathison climbed in and slammed the door. The porter watched the taxicab until the gray, swirling pall swallowed it up. He pocketed the bill.

"Dey ain't no reason why, but I sure hates t' take dat young man's money," he mused, remorsefully. "De undah dawg; I s'pose dat's it. W'en dey don't look like it dey is. What's he done, I wonduh? A parrot! Fust time I ev' seen a white man tote a parrot. An' he don't look like a henpeck, neither."

He turned and jogged back to the train.

The taxicabs began to straggle along. The streets were full of ruts and drifts, and the vehicles looked like giant beetles scurrying.

Gloomy town, thought Mathison, as he peered first from one window then from the other. Not a cheery, winking electric sign anywhere. Then he recalled the reason, as explained by the porter. A coal famine had forced a temporary abandonment of this wonder of American cities.

It was stinging cold, somewhere around

zero. He threw the lap-robe over the cage. Malachi wasn't used to the cold. The shop-windows gleamed like beaten gold, so thick were they with frost. The cab lurched, staggered, and skidded.

"Lord! but the smell of clean snow!" He dipped his chin into his collar. He had been away from this kind of weather so long that it bit in.

Cabs in front and cabs behind. Were they following him? Likely enough. They would be fools if they didn't. A hot bath and a bed for himself and a room to rove about in for Malachi. The thing was written, anyhow; and deep down in his soul he knew that he was going to pull through. Fire, water, and poison gas.

In about ten minutes the cab came to a halt. The door was opened and a bellboy grinned hopefully and hospitably. Mathison stepped down from the cab, gave a dollar to the driver, and reached for Malachi and one of the kit-bags, leaving the other for the boy. He sprang up the hotel steps, keenly exhilarated. He felt alive for the first time in days. He swept on to the desk, planted the kit-bag strategically and ordered a room with a bath. But as the

clerk offered the pen Mathison frowned. He hadn't planned against the contingency of signing his name to hotel registers. His slight hesitancy was not noticed by the clerk. Mathison was not without a fund of dry humoir, and a flash of it swept over him at this moment.

He wrote "Richard Whittington, London." He chuckled inwardly. The name had popped into his head with one of those freakish rallies of memory; but presently he was going to regret it.

"Room with bath; number three hundred and twenty. Here, boy! How long do you expect to be with us, sir?" asked the clerk, perfunctorily.

"Until morning. Train stalled on account of wreck. You have a good safe?"

"Strong as a bank's."

"Very good. I'll be down shortly with some valuables."

"Bird?"

"A parrakeet."

"That'll be all right. We bar dogs and cats."

The door of the elevator had scarcely closed behind Mathison when a man walked leisurely over to the desk and inspected the

freshly written signature. He seemed startled for a moment; then he laughed.

"A room, sir?"

"No. I was looking to see if a friend of mine had arrived. He hasn't."

The stranger walked away; he strolled into the bar, looked into the restaurant, mounted the first flight of stairs and wandered into the parlor, which was empty and chilly. Next he hailed an elevator and asked to be let out on the third floor. Here he walked to the end of the corridor and returned, took the next car down, and went directly into the street. At the north side of the hotel was an alley. The man stared speculatively into this, jumped into a waiting taxicab and made off.

Half an hour later a woman entered the hotel parlor, selected a chair by the corridor wall, and sat down. You might have gone into the parlor and departed without noticing her.

Meanwhile Mathison set the cage by the radiator, went into the bathroom, came back and felt of the bed, and smiled at the bellboy.

"This will do nicely. How big a town is this?"

"About seventy thousand, sir."

"What's the name of it?"

The boy grinned. Here was one of those "fresh guys" who were always springing wheezes like this because they thought the "hops" expected it.

"Petrograd."

Mathison caught the point immediately. "Boy, on my word, I haven't the least idea what the name of this town is. I'm off the stalled flyer, and I forgot to ask the porter. I wanted a bed instead of a bunk. Now shoot."

The boy named the town.

"What have you got in the line of theaters?"

"This is Tuesday," answered the boy.

"I know that. Is there a comic opera or a good burlesque?"

"Are you guying me? Where'd juh come from?"

"The other side of the world."

"I guess that's right. Why, this is showless Tuesday, all east of the Mississippi. Even little Mary Pickford ain't working to-day. New York, Boston—it's all the same. Nothing doing. The new law; all the theaters, movies, billiard-parlors, and bowling-alleys dark."

"Well, I'll be hanged!"

"It's the war, sir," said the boy, soberly. "I'm in the next draft. I don't want to kill anybody; but if I've got to do it I'm going to learn how."

Mathison held out his hand. "That's the kind of talk. It's bad, bloody work, but it's got to be done. Here's a telegram I want sent. Don't bother bringing back the change. But don't fail to have this wire sent."

"I won't fail, sir."

"Now, I want you to give this order to the waiter."

After a word or two the boy interrupted Mathison. "No meat. Fish, lobster, oysters, chicken."

"All right; make it chicken, then. And tell him to bring a banana and some almonds. And mind this particularly. Tell the waiter to knock once loudly. Make no mistake about that."

"Yes, sir"; but the boy's eyes began to widen perceptibly. Here was a queer bird.

After the boy had departed Mathison double-locked the door. Then he liberated Malachi. The bird came out and stood before the door of his cage indecisively.

Then he reached down and whetted his beak on the carpet.

"*Chup!*" he muttered.

"You little son-of-a-gun!" cried Mathison, delighted. It was the first time Malachi had spoken since leaving Manila. Mathison stooped and extended his index finger. By aid of claw and beak, the bird mounted the living perch and slowly worked his way up the arm. "The little son-of-a-gun, he's alive again! Malachi, are you cold?"

Malachi grumbled in his own tongue. Mathison approached a curtain, and the bird at once transferred himself to that, clawing his way up to the pole, where he began to preen himself. His master watched him for a few minutes contentedly. Then he looked out of the window. He saw the dim outlines of a fire-escape. He could also see a cross-section of the street beyond the alley: clouds of snow, spouts, whirlwinds.

He turned from the window swiftly and tiptoed to the door. Some one had turned the knob cautiously. Mathison waited patiently, but the knob did not turn again. Door-knobs—they had a mysterious way of turning in the night.

There would be no going out this night; so he might as well make himself comfortable. He turned to the kit-bags. He opened them both, took a pair of slippers from the top of one and a dressing-gown and toilet articles from the top of the other. The general contents of both bags were as neatly and as compactly arranged as a drummer's case; but always on top there would be pick-ups. By the time he had bathed, changed, put on the slippers and gown—a heavenly blue silk-brocade such as aristocratic Chinese wear—the waiter arrived with the dinner. He announced his arrival by a single knock.

The door was opened in a singular fashion. Mathison kept totally behind it. An Oriental trick; it gave one the opportunity to strike first, if it were necessary to strike; moreover, it prevented any one in the hall or corridor observing the occupant of the room. The moment the waiter stepped inside the door was closed and double-locked again.

"I shall require no service, waiter. Here's a bill; keep the change for your tip."

"Thank you, sir."

The lock and the latch were released simultaneously. So adroitly was this ac-

complished that the waiter never suspected that he had been locked in or that he was immediately going to be locked out.

Mathison crossed over to the table, peeled a banana, lopped off a bit, and jabbed the fork into it. This he took to the parrakeet. Malachi sidled along the pole solemnly and reached down a coral-red claw.

On going back to the table Mathison felt top-hole in spirit. The telegram was off. If anything happened they would know where to find him. After he had finished his dinner he would find a hiding-place for that manila envelope.

Suddenly he became seized by an ironic whimsy, an impulse which in normal times he would have analyzed as idiotic. Nevertheless, he proceeded to materialize it. He searched in his coat-pocket for the picture of the actress, sliced off the non-essentials, and propped it against the water carafe. With his hand on his heart he bowed.

"Paper lady, I am at once gratified and deeply chagrined to offer you a repast so poor. I had planned a club steak; I've been planning it for six long years, and patriotism compels me to eat chicken—which I abominate! You are disappointed?

I'm sorry. You won't look at me? Very well. That's not your fault; it's the fault of the fool photographer, the way he posed you. Crazy? Well, perhaps. But, Lord's truth, I wish I did know somebody like you. I'm the lonesomest duffer in all this God-forsaken world!"

So, while he munched his chicken and Malachi his banana, the clerk at the desk was having his worries.

"A queer bunch got off that stalled train," he said to the manager.

"What's the trouble?"

"First a tanned chap with two bags and a parrot signs his name and beats it for the elevator as if he were afraid the room would vanish before he got to it. Another man comes up and looks the book over. He laughs. Then he walks off. Right away comes a veiled woman who does the same thing. Only she signs. A coat that would pay next year's taxes, but no hat. She wants room two hundred and twenty. I ask where her luggage is, and she says she left it on the train. But she hands me a twenty. I let her have the key. Then up comes Sanford, of *The Courier*. When he pipes those two names he yells."

"What's the matter with them?" asked the manager. He was not particularly interested.

"Why, look at this. Richard Whittington, London. Sanford says there was only one man ever had that name, and he was Lord Mayor of London five hundred years ago."

"Oh, pshaw!"

"Wait a minute. Here's the name the woman wrote. Manon Roland. Sanford says her head was cut off in the French Revolution in 1793. One alone, all right; but two!"

"So long as they pay the bill and behave themselves there's nothing for us to do. Perhaps they are celebrities and don't want to be bothered by reporters."

"A new brand, then. I never saw this kind before. Anyhow, I thought I'd put you wise."

From afar Mathison heard the shrill, prolonged blast of a railway whistle. Then a rush of cold air struck him. The paper lady rose suddenly and began a series of violent spiral whirls toward the door. Mathison sprang to his feet, turning, his

automatic ready. He remembered now that he had forgotten to examine the window lock.

Through this window came a woman. She stumbled and fell to her knees, but she got up instantly. She wore no hat. Her hair, like Roman gold, sparkled with melting snow-flakes. Under this hair was a face which had the exquisite pallor of Carrara marble. Her eyes were as purple as Manila Bay after the sunset gun. From her shoulders hung a sable coat worth a king's ransom.

Mathison's heart gave a great bound; then his brain cleared and his thoughts became cold and precise. He knew who she was. Beautiful beyond anything his fertile imagination had conceived of her: warm and fragrant as a Persian rose. Small wonder that poor old Bob Hallowell had gone to smash over her. But what did The Yellow Typhoon want of John Mathison?

"You are John Mathison?" she asked, her voice scarcely audible. "Richard Whittington?"

"Yes." His eyes still marveling over the beauty of her. It was unbelievable. A wave of poignant regret went over him.

The tender loveliness of a Bouguereau housing the soul of a Salome!

"Then take heed. You are in grave danger. You carry something certain men want desperately Don't go into the hall; don't leave your room under any circumstances to-night. The hall is watched. I dared not come to your door. They must never know that I have aided you. I had to climb the fire-escape. I dared not trust the telephone. Hide whatever you have and hide it well."

It is possible that Mathison presented a unique picture to the woman. The blue robe fluttered, bulged, and collapsed in the wind. It fell to his feet, shimmering. But for the color of it—had it been yellow—Mathison might have posed as a priest of Buddha. His handsome, bronzed face, the cold impassivity of his eyes and mouth, might have passed inspection on the platform of the Shwe Dagon pagoda in Rangoon—if one overlooked the healthy thatch of hair on his head.

She broke the tableau by taking from the pocket of her gray coat a gray veil which she wound about her head, turban-wise, dropping the edge just above her lips.

"One word more. I am a creature of impulse. I may regret this whim shortly. I may even return. I don't know. But if I do, watch out! . . . Beware of me!"

She backed to the window, stepped through to the fire-escape and vanished into the night.

CHAPTER IX

FOR a space Mathison did not stir. There was something hypnotic in this singular visitation, but it was physical rather than mental. He stared at the blank square of the window as Medusa's victims must have stared at her—stonily. Morgan had described the woman minutely, and out of these substances and delineations Mathison had created a blonde Judith, something at once beautiful and terrifying. And yet he recognized the woman almost immediately.

The mind often acts inconsequently in crises. At the back of his brain something was clamoring for recognition. He was conscious of the call, but there seemed to be a blank wall in between. It was conceivable that the sheer loveliness of the woman dazed him. On his guard, yes, alert and watchful, but otherwise nonplussed. His confusion was doubtless due to the fact that he could not put the two salients to-

gether. It was utterly illogical that any woman so tenderly beautiful should be called The Yellow Typhoon.

He recalled Morgan's description. "A passionless, merciless leopardess. She would have curled Saint Anthony's beard and taken Michael's flaming sword away from him. A destroyer. Don't get the impression that she is what we call on the loose. That's the most singular part of it. Her reputation isn't along that line. Breaks men for the pure deviltry of it; honorable men, men too proud to fight back. Understand? Always the poor devil who has something or everything to lose. A bigamist, because that seemed to be the most exciting game she could apply her arts to. And always just beyond the reach of the law. I don't suppose there's a court in the world that could convict her of bigamy. So, keep your eyes open and your guard up. Remember, I wanted to ransack the ship."

And what kind of a game was she about to spring? She had warned him. But she had added that she might return; and in that event, let him beware. He thought keenly for a moment, and presently he saw a way out of the labyrinth. Very clever!

His enemies were in the adjoining rooms, watching him from some peephole or other. A trick to make him take the manila envelope out of his kit-bag and hide it anew—where they could find it when they wanted it. He had made his first mistake. He should have deposited the envelope in the safe before coming up. The hesitance over inscribing his name—any name—on the register had befogged him temporarily. His whole carefully built campaign depended upon getting that manila envelope to New York.

What followed was a revelation in clear thinking, acted upon swiftly.

He pulled down the window, locked it, and drew the shade. He got into his clothes again, dropped the automatic into the right pocket of his coat, all the while taking inventory of his surroundings in panoramic glances. Not a step wasted, not a thought that needed readjusting. Under the telephone was a waste-basket. In this there was a discarded newspaper. He crossed the room and turned off the lights. What he did now was done in the dark. From one of the kit-bags he procured the manila envelope and the little red book, which he strapped together with a rubber band. He

tiptoed over to the waste-basket and slipped his precious packet into the folds of the newspaper, which he returned to the basket. He turned on the lights and took down the telephone.

"Hello!" he called, softly. "This is room three hundred and twenty. Will you kindly ascertain for me if rooms three eighteen and three twenty-two are occupied by passengers from the stalled flier from Chicago? . . . Yes, I'll hold the wire." Two minutes passed. "They are not? Thank you. No; nothing of importance. Didn't know but they might be friends from the train." So there was nothing to fear from the adjoining rooms. That was a weight off his mind.

But it was also a new angle to the puzzle. Had the woman really tried to do him a service? Was it inspired by some vague regret for Hallowell? Out of one labyrinth, but into another. He ran to the windows and threw up the shades. The fire-escape was empty. He went back to the telephone. It was barely possible that she had come up from the room below. That would be 220.

"Is the lady still in room two twenty? . . .

Oh, never mind the name. Is she still there? . . . She isn't? Gave up the key a moment ago? . . . No, there isn't any trouble. She came from the stalled train . . . She said she would not return? Thanks."

A blind alley. He couldn't solve the riddle at all. And because he couldn't solve it he sensed danger, a danger which ran around him in a circle.

He glanced up at the bird on the curtain-pole. Malachi had finished his dinner and was polishing his beak.

"Malachi, they've got me guessing!"

"*Chup!*" said the little green bird, spreading out his clipped wing. It was warm and cozy up there near the ceiling. He loved window-curtain poles. "Mat, you lubber, where's my tobacco?"

That phrase! It seemed to Mathison that a hand had reached out and caught him by the throat. Bob! The dear, absent-minded Hallowell! How often had he teased him by putting his tobacco-canister on the other end of the table! Bob, blind if you stirred anything on his end of the table from its accustomed place, would start hunting about the room, swearing good-naturedly.

Mathison began to pace the room. The infernal beauty of her! Negative for good and positive for evil; somehow it hurt him. He felt outraged that God should give all these lovely attributes to a daughter of Beelzebub.

Down-stairs, the clerk went into the manager's office.

"I tell you something queer is going on in this hotel."

"What now?"

"The Lord Mayor of London makes waiters signal on his door before he'll let them in. Then he begins asking questions about the people on either side of him. To cap the climax, he asked about the woman who had her head cut off in 1793."

"What? Oh yes, I see; those names on the register. Well?"

"Something fishy. The woman just surrendered her key and waltzed out."

"Gone?"

"With last year's cabbages."

"Maybe it's an elopement," suggested the manager, hopefully. Elopements were first-rate advertisements.

"Nix on the elopement. The real article gets married before they come to a hotel

like the Watkins. She went up to the room I gave her and came down again. No complaints. Just surrendered the key and faded."

"Didn't ask any questions about the man?"

"Nope. There's where the mystery comes in. Mind, we'll have a robbery or a murder on our hands before morning."

"Piffle! If the woman is gone for good we can't risk meddling with this Lord Mayor chap. I'm not courting suits for damages these days; not me. You've been going to the movies too much. Anyhow, she paid five for the room. It's none of our business if she doesn't sleep in it."

"All right. Only, don't jump on me if anything happens."

"Tell your troubles to the house detective. That's what he's here for."

The clerk acted on this advice at once. "Michaels," he said, "you take this key and look around room two twenty. See if the woman took or left anything. There's a queer game going on here to-night."

The house detective returned shortly. He doubted if any one had been in room 220 at all.

"Better stick around, anyhow."

"All right."

At the police-station the night captain rocked in his swivel-chair and chewed his cigar. There had recurred to his mind an old phrase, which applied to the crook as well as to the honest man, "He travels fastest who travels alone." Well, so long as it was fish to his net, he had no right to complain. On his desk lay a stack of those sinister handbills which the police send hither and thither across the continent under the caption "Wanted." From time to time he referred to a letter which he had just received by messenger. A fall-down on the divvy, and the pal blows the game. But a thousand dollars, a real bank-roll, was worth trying for these hard times. All he had to do was to call up the Watkins. If there was anything to the information, the hotel clerk would be able to tell. He drew the telephone toward him.

"This the Watkins? . . . Police-station talking. Man by the name of Richard Whittington registered? . . . He is? Good! Listen to me. Describe him." The captain smoothed out a handbill and kept his eye on it obliquely. "All right. Tall,

very dark, good-looking, blue eyes, smooth, no beard. Yes, that sounds like him . . . 'Black' Ellison, wanted in San Francisco for diamond robbery and assault. . . . There was a woman? Gone? That's tough. She may have taken the swag. Well, it can't be helped. Get the man down-stairs to the private office. I'll send Murphy over in fifteen minutes. Better call in a patrolman. This man Ellison is a strong-arm, for all his good looks."

Up in room 320 Mathison found it impossible to keep that lovely face out of his thoughts. Something was wrong with the world. If ever he had looked into a countenance upon which was written honesty . . .

"The voice!" he cried, stopping suddenly. "The voice! That's the thing that's been hammering in the back of my head. I've heard that voice before. Where? How?" He rumpled his hair. "Where have I heard her voice?"

He had heard her laugh that night when she had come on deck in the Chinese costume. But the speaking voice! Where had he heard that?

Malachi, sensing his master's agitation, sidled back and forth along the curtain-

pole, grumbling as his feet came into contact with the cold brass rings.

By and by Mathison saw the paper lady on the floor; saw it with eyes busy with introspection. He stooped; the act was purely mechanical. He went on with his pacing. He folded and refolded the slip of paper many times and at length stowed it away in a pocket, without having glanced at it once, without recalling his desire to meet her, if she happened to be in New York when he arrived there.

He heard a sound. It came from the window. He wheeled quickly, his hand going into his pocket as he turned. He had almost forgotten!

Tap-tap-tap!

Dimly he saw a woman's face against the pane. She had come back! The monumental nerve of her! On the way to the window he formed his plan of action. He would give her all the rope she wanted; he would act as if he had never seen her before, play her as a fisherman plays a trout. She had warned him, and he would not ignore her warning. He ran to the window, unlocked it, and threw it up.

The woman stumbled into the room, the

expression on her face one of great terror. Hair like spun molasses, sparkling with melting snowflakes, skin like Carrara marble, with an odd little mole at the corner of her mouth, and eyes as purple as Manila Bay at sunset. From her shoulders hung a sable coat worth a king's ransom. Mathison raised her to her feet. "What is it? What's the trouble?" he asked, pulling forward a chair. Terrified. Had they discovered what she had done and had she flown to him for protection? "Beware of me!" she had said.

She sank into the chair and covered her face with her ungloved hands, rocking her body and moaning slightly.

"What's the trouble?" It took some effort to keep the ironical out of his voice. What a queer little mole! he thought. He hadn't noticed it before.

She let her hands fall. "I'm in the most horribly embarrassing situation," she panted. She clasped her hands on her knees and the fingers began to snarl and twist, as they will when a body is under great mental stress. "You won't mind if I stay here a few minutes?"

"Not in the least, provided you give me

an idea what's happened to drive you into this room." Mathison put both hands into the side-pockets of his coat.

"Couldn't it be possible to stay without explaining?" she pleaded.

Not a sign that she had been in this room less than half an hour gone. What *was* her game? Mathison, from the ironical spirit, passed into one of bewilderment. Her voice wasn't quite the same, either; it was higher, thinner. He was giving her rope, but so far she wasn't making any especial effort to gather it in. Very well; he would continue to play up to her lead and see where it led. But stretch his imagination to its fullest, he could not figure out what her game was.

He answered her query. "Supposing you were found here? I don't object, mind you; only, I'd like to know how to act should occasion arise."

"I . . . I don't know how to begin! It will sound so silly and futile!" she faltered. Her gaze roved rather wildly about. "My husband . . . he has the most violent temper and is most insanely jealous. Somehow he learned I was here—in the restaurant. I saw him as he entered the main entrance.

I tried to slip out at the side . . . but I was not quick enough. By this time he will have had the whole hotel by the ears. Oh, it is degrading—shameful!" The woman turned her head against her shoulder and closed her eyes. Mathison noted the plain gold band among the gems on her fingers. "I haven't done anything wrong. I like amusement; I like clothes. . . . I can't stand it much longer! . . . He keeps me shut up all the time. What's the good of clothes if you can't wear them? I can't go anywhere, I can't do anything! I wish I were dead!"

Maddening! He wanted to take hold of her and shake her. But he said, soothingly: "You don't wish that. You ought not to have run away."

"I know, but I couldn't stand a scene among all those people. I see now I've only made it worse by running! . . . I got into the parlor somehow. Then I saw the fire-escape. I stepped out and closed the window, but I found I didn't dare drop twelve feet or more to the sidewalk."

Mathison nodded. There was nothing else to do.

"And I made the fire-escape just in

time. He came storming into the parlor, followed by a clerk and a bellboy. The shame of it! None of them thought to look out. I'd have been frozen but for this coat. Then it came to me—I was so desperate!—that I might find a window open if I climbed up . . . And I saw you. I sha'n't bother you more than ten minutes . . . Just enough time to get my nerves steadied. If he doesn't find me soon he'll go home. I can stand a scene there."

"Where's the other man? A fine chap, to leave you in the lurch like this!" cried Mathison, indignantly.

Her eyes opened; they expressed dismay. "Oh, but I wasn't with any one!"

"Alone? Good Lord! why did you run away?"

"He would have made a scene just the same. He would always swear that there was another man somewhere. I suppose he'll kill me some day. I ought not to have run; but I simply could not stand a scene in the restaurant!" She hunted about for a handkerchief, found one, and rubbed her cold little nose with it. "It sounds so silly, doesn't it? I don't know what to do!"

"Stay as long as you like. Shall I send for a cup of coffee? You must be frozen."

"No, no! You mustn't take the least trouble. I'm sorry. I just opened the window and stepped inside. I really had only one idea—to escape."

"Suppose you describe your husband. I'll call up the office and see if he has gone."

"Good Heavens, no!" her terror returning. "I am really lost if it should become known that I had taken a risk such as this. Besides, it might get you into trouble. Please no! Just a few minutes—ten—fifteen. He'll go when he can't find me. I'll return to the parlor by the way I came."

Why didn't she take out a revolver, cover him in the conventional style, and open the door for her friends in the hall? Or had she noticed that his right hand was still in the pocket of his coat? As a test he withdrew the hand. She did not appear to observe the movement. The word "baffled" had always appealed to him as blood-and-thunder stuff; but now he began to understand that it was a serious and substantial condition of the mind.

"You're welcome, any way you desire it. I'll tell you what. I'll write a letter I had

in mind. It will serve to relieve you of your embarrassment. It certainly will relieve mine."

He opened one of the kit-bags and dug out his letter-portfolio. He cleared a space on the table and sat down, facing the young woman, though apparently giving her no more attention. He started the letter, paused, tore up what he had written, and tossed the bits to the floor. The next attempt seemed to be successful, for he wrote several pages, finally sealing it in an envelope. Had the woman been able to read the contents of this letter she would have been profoundly astonished. It was a minute description of her, from the tortoise-shell comb in her hair to the white sandals on her feet.

He re-read the document; and as he came to the end of it he missed something, an essential which impressed him previously. Covertly he ran his glance over her again. Something was gone, but he could not tell what it was.

For all that she did not appear to be doing so, he knew that not a single move he made escaped her. Often he gazed at the kit-bags, but never did he let his glance stray anywhere near the waste-basket.

He wondered. Supposing the two visitations, the second ignoring the first as though it had never happened—supposing they had been launched for the express purpose of baffling and bewildering him, eventually causing him to lower his guard? Here at last was a solution that had a grain of sense.

Mathison rose and filled his pipe.

"You won't mind if I smoke and jog about a bit? I'm restless. I've had a long attack of insomnia."

"Please pay no attention to me."

After a glance at his watch he fell to pacing once more. But he paced in a peculiar manner—up and down the corridor wall. That is to say, he had the window and The Yellow Typhoon always under covert observation.

As for the woman, she now relaxed. Her lovely hands lay limply on her knees and her eyes were closed—or seemed to be. But each time the elevator door slammed she started nervously. Good acting, Mathison admitted. The jealous husband! He fought the desire to walk over to her, to smother her with the storm of words burning his tongue. There must be an overt act on her part first. The infernal beauty of her!

"Mat, you lubber!"

Even Mathison received a shock. He had forgotten Malachi. The woman sprang to her feet and whirled about, expecting to see some one behind her chair. She saw nothing. Bewildered, her gaze came back to Mathison, who pointed to the curtain-pole.

"A little parrot!" She sank back into the chair weakly. "I thought some one was behind me!"

"I had forgotten him."

"*Chup! Chota Malachi!*"

"What does he say?"

"That's Hindustani. He's telling me to be still and that he is a little bird."

"A Hindu parrot!" The woman gazed at the bird, frankly interested. "What a funny little bird! You have traveled far?"

"Half-way around the world. My train was stalled to-night; so Malachi and I concluded to spend the night in peace and quiet. I rather wanted to hear him talk. Boats and trains bother him, and he hasn't spoken for days."

"A parrot!"

"A parrakeet," he corrected.

"I never knew that men carried them

about. I thought it was always fussy old maids."

"I'm a deep-sea sailor; and we sailors are always lugging around pets for mascots. I have lived in the Orient for six years." He spoke with engaging frankness. Why not? Was there anything concerning John Mathison that she did not know?

"What do you call him?"

"Malachi."

"What does that mean?"

"You have me there. It was the name of an elephant in one of Kipling's yarns."

"I see. . . . What's that?" she broke off.

Mathison stood perfectly still, chin up, eyes alert. The elevator door had slammed with unusual violence. This sound was followed by another—hurrying feet. Then came a blow of a fist on the panel of the door.

"What's wanted?" demanded Mathison, coldly

"Open the door!"

"Who is it and what is wanted?"

"Open, or we'll break in!"

The woman flew to the window. While she was lifting it Mathison spoke to her.

"You are leaving?" broadly ironical.

"My husband! . . . He will kill me!"

"Which husband? Hallowell, Graham, Morris?"

She sent him a glance that radiated venom. It was almost as if she had suddenly poisoned the air.

"The Yellow Typhoon! And you supposed I would not recognize you, never having seen you? I don't know what your game was in warning me. No matter. Morgan was right. He said you were a beautiful mirage at the mouth of hell."

"Open the door!" came from the hall.

The woman stepped through the window, sent it rattling to the sill; and that was the last Mathison saw of her for many hours. He walked to the door.

"I will open the door only upon one condition—that you inform me who it is and what is wanted of me," he declared, still in level tones.

"It's the house detective, and you're wanted, me Lord Mayor of London!"

Mathison thought rapidly. He attacked the affair from all angles. The house detective!

Against the door came the thud of a human body.

"Never mind breaking in the door," Mathison called. "I'll open it."

He did so; and four men came rushing in—the house detective, the manager, the inquisitive clerk, and a policeman.

"The Lord Mayor of London, huh?" bellowed the house detective. He carried a revolver. "Put up your hands!" Mathison obeyed promptly. Michaels ran his hand over Mathison's pockets and gave a cry of delight as he brought forth the heavy Colt automatic. "A gat! I thought I'd find one."

"Now then," said Mathison, still able to hold his rage in check, "be so good as to explain what the devil all this means?"

"We'll explain that in the office."

"We'll explain it here and now, or you'll have to carry me. And in that event I can promise you some excitement."

"All right, me lud. Word comes from the police headquarters to hold you and hold you good. You're 'Black' Ellison, and there's a thousand iron boys waiting to be paid over on your delivery. We'll carry you, if you say so."

So that was it! Mathison saw the whole thing in a flash. Clever, clever beyond

anything he had imagined. To get him out of the room in a perfectly logical way, and then search it. He saw clearly that his own mysterious actions would be held against him. Caught! He couldn't help admiring the method. The woman to keep him interested and puzzled until they were ready to fire the train.

"Is there any reason why we can't remain here? You've got to prove that I'm the man you want."

"Orders are to take you down to the private office," said the policeman.

"No objection to my taking my things along?"

"Your things, bo, will stay right where they are until Murphy looks them over."

"How am I to know that no one will enter this room while I'm down-stairs?"

"I can promise you that," said the manager.

"Don't open the window. There's a little bird up there on the curtain-pole; and he might fly out or try to."

The visitors stared at Malachi interestedly.

"He sha'n't be touched," declared the manager, a fit of trembling seizing him. If

this turned out wrong and the victim came back with a suit of damages! "It's no fault of the hotel, sir. The order comes from the police."

A few words, the exhibition of a paper or two, and Mathison knew that the tide would have turned immediately in his favor. But this step he stubbornly refused to take. The spirit of the gambler who scorns to hedge. Upon leaving the security of the train he had laid his offerings at the feet of Chance. He would follow through. At any rate, he determined not to disclose his identity until he had to.

"Very well; I'll go with you. But I'll put the bird back in his cage if you don't mind."

After a bit of coaxing Malachi came down from his perch and Mathison bundled him into the cage, which he set beside the radiator. He then stepped into the corridor. But he waited to see if the manager locked the door. The manager did more than that. He gave the key to Mathison, who marched over to the elevator and pressed the button.

"A cool one," whispered the excited clerk. "Didn't I tell you there was something off-color?"

The manager made a gesture. He wasn't at all happy. People would have smiled over an elopement; but the arrest of a dangerous criminal always reacted against the hotel. "You need not worry about your belongings, sir," he said to Mathison.

"I'm not worrying. I'm going to leave that for you to do."

"Bluff won't get you anywhere," growled the house detective.

"It seems to have landed you a soft job," countered Mathison, smiling as he entered the elevator.

The clerk grinned. He and the house detective were not exactly friendly.

Once in the manager's private office, Mathison coolly appropriated the managerial chair. He kept his eye on the desk clock and appeared oblivious to the low murmurings behind his back. Five minutes —ten—fifteen; he could feel the sweat rising at the roots of his hair. Trapped! They had come at him from an original angle, and the only counter for it was the disclosure of his hand. No doubt the woman was already at work. If they took him to the police-station for the night; if the maid cleaned out the room thoroughly in the morning!

"Got him, I see!" cried a cheery voice from the doorway.

Mathison turned. He saw a small, brisk Irishman, with a humorous mouth and a pair of keenly intelligent eyes. He gave a sigh of relief. Here was some one who looked as if he had the gift of reason. Pray God that he had!

"Stand up!"

Mathison obeyed.

"Humph! Got anything to say?"

"No; except if you'll come to the room with me I'll give you the stuff. I know when I'm beaten."

"Who's this woman, Manon Roland?"

"Roland? Don't know anybody by that name."

"The woman you were asking questions about over the 'phone."

"So her name was Roland!"

"All right; we'll come back to her again. You used to travel alone. Why did you hook up? Pals always blow."

"No man is perfect. Come to my room and I'll turn the stuff over to you." Mathison wondered what it was he had stolen. "You'll never find it without my help. You and I alone. Is it a bargain?"

"I'll look you over first."

"Here's his gat, Murphy," said the house detective.

Murphy thrust the automatic in his pocket without comment. He ran his keen glance over the prisoner. "Hold out your hands, fingers spread; I want to look at them. That's the way. Now turn your face toward the light. Uh-huh. You admit you are 'Black' Ellison?"

"Yes." Anything to get back into the room!

"All right. I'll go up with you for the swag. But walk carefully. I'm excitable by nature."

"Better take me along," urged the house detective. He was anxious to be in the newspapers on the morrow.

"You folks stay right where you are, I'm running this. Step along, Mr. Ellison."

Murphy pushed Mathison toward the door. The two crossed the lobby to the elevator and were shot up to the third floor.

"I'll be right at your elbow, so play it straight. There's something about your hurry that interests me, bo."

Mathison rushed to the door, unlocked

it and pushed it in violently. He sent a lightning glance about the room and leaned dizzily against the door-jamb.

"For the love o' Mike, they never told me you'd put up a scrap like this!"

"I didn't put up any scrap," said Mathison, dully.

"What's hit this room, then—an earthquake?"

"A typhoon."

Malachi was all right, but the waste-basket was empty.

CHAPTER X

MATHISON accepted the blow quietly. He had the air of a spent athlete, but that was all. He was a good loser. To have rushed about, sending out alarms, advising the Secret Service, all would have been a waste of time. The damage was complete, irremediable. Beaten—that was the word; he knew it.

Havoc! The bedding was strewn across the floor, mattress and bolster; the pillows had been shaken from their cases. All the drawers in the bureau and commode had been pulled out and their paper linings tossed about. The two kit-bags had been slashed completely across and their entire contents scattered. Even the pockets of the coats and trousers had been turned inside out. Nothing had escaped.

Beaten! Until to-night he had had a perfect defense. He tried to reach back to analyze the cause which had emboldened

him to leave the security of the car, but it wasn't reachable. The want of sleep? The craving for exercise? Mere bewilderment? He couldn't solve it; just one of those moves which continue to render human beings fallible. Why hadn't he left the envelope in the safe? What idiocy had inveigled him to carry it to his room? A lone hand. He had tried the superhuman. One trained mind against three or four trained minds, and the odds had been too great. He had left the realm of absolute mathematics for the impositive, chance, with this tragic result.

With infinite care he had contrived a web; so had they. They had broken through his, and now he found himself in theirs. Flight. They would be gone like the winds. They had done something more than beaten him at the game; they had shattered his self-confidence. Doubt; all his future moves would be under the shadow of doubt. Should he do this, or should he do that, or should he ask advice? The commander of a destroyer should have supreme confidence in himself; and at present it did not look as if John Mathison would go abroad with that. He might re-establish this qual-

ity, but only by passing successfully through some vital conflict.

Hallowell! Old Bob Hallowell! It was as if he had broken faith with his friend.

"Mat! . . . Malachi!"

Thunderstruck, Mathison jumped to his feet, while Murphy, the detective, looked wildly about for the third man. Mathison seized him by the arm.

"For God's sake, hush! Be still! It's that little green bird."

"Mat! . . . Malachi!" It was the same wailing accent of that dreadful night in Manila. It was Hallowell himself speaking!

Malachi, tremendously agitated, was climbing up to his swing and down to his perch. The incredible had happened. Suggestion. Once before the bird had witnessed a confusion in the making, something like this.

"Mat! . . . Malachi!" he wailed.

Then came a jumble of phrases in polyglot, sailors' oaths, scraps of Hindustani and Spanish. But after a few minutes he began to mutter in parrakeetese. That peculiar cell in Malachi's head had closed up again. Mathison urged and coaxed in

vain. Malachi rolled his yellow eyes and continued to mutter. The irony of it lay in the fact that his fear had subsided. Wasn't this his master?

"Well, I—be—damn!" exploded Murphy. "A talking parrot! Say"—wrathfully—"why did you give me that bunk about being Ellison?"

"Quickest way I could get back to this room. All this was accomplished while they were holding me down-stairs."

"A frame-up! I knew the moment you held out your hands that you weren't Ellison. The forefinger of his right hand is missing. Look at those grips! Bo, what *did* you have?"

"They got it."

"All right. Come on. I'll send out a general alarm. We'll run a comb over the town. Off your train, too, I'll gamble. Get a move on!"

"Thanks, Mr. Murphy; but it wouldn't do a bit of good. The damage is done. And ten to one they've already boarded a freight."

"Going to let 'em put it over without a kick?"

The thing they took was valuable only so long as it remained in my possession.

The Chinese have a saying—you can't pour water into a shattered jar."

"Are you trying to get my goat?"

"No. I'm stating bald facts."

"You're a queer kind of a guy. What was it, a diamond toothpick?" Murphy began to wander around the room. "A frame-up, and a bully one. The only way they could get you out of this room for a while until your identity was established. Why didn't you set up a holler?"

Mathison shook his head and sat down. "Am I your prisoner?"

"Prisoner my eye! Only, I'm naturally a curious cuss. Crook stuff?"

"Not in the sense you mean."

"Would it do any good to arrest them?"

"You couldn't arrest them."

"The hell I couldn't! What are they, pro-Germans from that dear Chicago?"

"No."

"Well, I'll nose about."

"It won't do you any good."

"You don't know this Roland woman?"

"Never saw her before in my life."

"Then you saw her?" quickly.

"Go ahead and see what you can find," said Mathison, curtly.

The infernal beauty of her! It would haunt him as long as he lived. The strength of those beautiful hands! This havoc all inside of an hour! Mathison lighted his pipe.

Murphy did not touch anything. He seemed to be thinking rather than observing. By and by he went to the window, opened it, and stepped outside. He was absent perhaps ten minutes. He came back, stamped the snow from his shoes, and put away the pocket-lamp.

"Find anything?"

"You're not much on the gab-fest, are you?" said Murphy, amiably. "Two women! One of 'em wore arctics and the other sandals; and the one with the sandals wrecked the place! Bo, was it love-letters—divorce stuff? Good-lookers?"

"There was only one woman," wearily.

"Two. My job is noticing things. When I say that two women went up and down that fire-escape I know what I'm talking about."

Mathison shrugged. It wasn't worth while arguing.

"The woman with the arctics came first, then the woman with the sandals. While the latter was in the room tidying up things the other was hiding behind the fire-

escape stairs. Easy on a night like this with the snow high on the steps. All in the tracks as plain as the nose on your face. Arctics came from the room below; sandals got out of the parlor."

Mathison listened politely. "Very interesting; all in the tracks." He had determined not to dissent. The man had a right to his theories; but it happened that John Mathison knew all the facts.

"Bo, this is queer business," said the detective. "What you've lost don't seem to curl your hair any. Love-letters! The fool woman is always writing them and then bawling to heaven to get them back. . . . For the love o' Mike, what's this? Is this coat yours?"

"Yes."

"You are an officer in the United States navy?"

"I am."

"Well, well! Now there's some reason to all these fireworks. War stuff!"

"You might call it that."

"Need any help?"

"You might tell them in the office to send up two pairs of shoe-strings and a leather-punch. I'll have to patch up those bags."

Murphy pushed back his hat. "Well, I'll be tinker-dammed!" Then he laughed. "I'd like to play poker with you. Two pairs of shoe-strings! That'll kill 'em cold in the office. They'll think I've forgotten my handcuffs. War stuff! No use asking you what it was the woman took."

"No."

"Well, it's your funeral."

"Exactly. And when you order the shoe-strings you might send out for an oak wreath with a purple ribbon."

"Glad you struck the town. There wasn't even a movie to-night. Bo, I'll give you all the help I can without asking questions. I know a fighting-man when I see him. A fighting-sailor with a talking parrot! Well, I'll shoot that order for the shoe-strings. And when the bird began to talk I thought there was some one else in the room!"

"There was," said Mathison, in an odd voice.

"Huh? Spirits? You don't look like a man who would waste any time with the ouija-board. Well, here's for the shoe-strings and the punch."

When the clerk received the order he made the sender repeat it.

"Shoe-strings!" he yelled.

"What now?" demanded the house detective, surlily.

"Murphy wants two pairs of shoe-strings and a leather-punch! I tell you, the whole house has gone bug. You run up. Murphy's been hypnotized or he has had a punch of dope. Here, boy; run down to the Macedonian shoeblack and get two pairs of shoe-strings and a punch. Hustle!"

"Shoe-strings!" Michaels the house detective ran for the elevator. But when he reached room 320 he was told emphatically —through the door—to take his bonehead down-stairs again. "Cahoots!" he murmured. And all the rest of his life he was going to hold to the belief that Ellison and Murphy had divided up the loot.

At eleven o'clock Mathison and Detective Murphy came down into the lobby. Murphy carried the parrot-cage. There was a grin on his face as he left the elevator, but it vanished as he neared the desk.

"My bill," said Mathison. He had decided to return to the train.

"What?" The poor clerk stared at Murphy for the key to this riddle.

"The bill, the bill! Give the gentleman his bill, you dub!"

In turning, the clerk knocked over the desk-telephone. As he stooped to recover it he bumped his head against the corner of the cashier's cage. When he finally presented the bill he was a total wreck.

"Was it . . . ?" he faltered.

"No, it wasn't," snapped Murphy. "We've all been flimflammed."

"But those names!"

"Can't you recognize Jack Barrymore when you see him? He's traveling incog."

"But he *said* he was the other fellow!"

"Well, Jack likes his joke."

"I wanted to get back to my room," interposed Mathison, taking pity on the clerk's bewilderment. "There's been a misunderstanding all round. Keep the change and buy yourself some cigars with it."

As Mathison and the detective disappeared through the revolving doors the clerk turned to the cashier. "Keep your eye on things for a while. *I'm* going out and root up a drink. I might understand something of this if I was full of hootch."

When Mathison and the detective entered the car George the porter was moving about

sleepily. "What's de mattah wid dat hotel?" he demanded, reproachfully.

"Too much excelsior, George, and not enough feathers."

"Well, I had de bed made up, case yo' did come back. . . . Lan' sakes, what's happened t' dem satchels?"

"The chef ran amuck with the cleaver," explained Murphy, owlishly. He turned to Mathison. "Here's that cannon of yours. Take care of yourself. Gee! if you were a crook and I was chasing you, what a lot of fun we'd have!"

"Thanks for the compliment. Truthfully, I had expected to spend the night in jail."

The porter's ears twitched.

The two men shook hands, and Mathison vanished behind the door of his compartment. George eyed the door speculatively. Jail. He tiptoed to No. 2 and knocked.

"What is it?" came through the crack.

"He's come back!" George whispered.

CHAPTER XI

MATHISON undresseed slowly. He was still hypnotized to a certain extent by the several amazing events of the night. From the shadowy corners of the compartment the woman's face persisted in appearing, now in all its warm loveliness, now in terror, and again like chiseled marble. It would be a long time before he would be able to stamp out completely the impression. It did not seem possible that any woman could be so lovely outside and so ugly within. The venom in her glance, just before she stepped out of the window!

The thought of Hallowell hurt more than anything else. Unavenged! Bob would lie in his island grave unavenged. But before God, he, John Mathison, would take a double tithe from the Hun. No mercy. Never would he hear the word *Kamerad.* Soon the number on his free-board would spell *Terror.*

He uncovered Malachi and knelt beside the cage. "Mat! . . . Malachi!" he said. "Mat! . . . Malachi!" But the only sign from the bird was a ruffling of the neck and topknot feathers, a quick dilation of his yellow eyes. Two or three minutes earlier in getting into that room, while the bird's fright was at full! No way to make him understand; he was only a parrakeet, an echo. "Mat! . . . Malachi!" It was Bob calling; the little bird was only an echo.

Suddenly Mathison stood up, his face eager. A real idea! And it never would have entered his head but for the startling revelation of what suggestion might accomplish. If the woman's tempestuous actions had awakened the bird's recollection, what might a reconstruction of the crime do? Men apparently in desperate conflict, tables and chairs threshed about, tumult, cries! How would these react upon Malachi's memory?

Of course no jury would convict a man of a crime upon evidence furnished by a talking parrakeet; but if, by reconstructing the tragedy, Malachi could be made to repeat the name Hallowell had called out,

it would serve to give the authorities a handhold. Trust them to dig up the truth eventually. For Mathison was obsessed with the idea that Hallowell had spoken a name for Malachi to repeat.

Sleep—the lack of sleep. They never would have gotten to him but for the craving to sleep. He had gone into the town feeling as keen mentally as ever, and his keenness had been only superficial. He had sought the open without any definite campaign. Want of sleep. His flesh and bones had been crying out for sleep, and his brain stifling the call. Patience. They had had a little more than John Mathison.

To-night, however, he would satisfy the craving. There would be no more sleep-fumes or pistol-shots or turning door-knobs.

By one o'clock the car Mercutio was as silent as the tomb of Romeo's friend.

Tap, tap; pause; tap, tap.

Mathison was asleep, but as yet he had not conquered that subconscious alertness of the mind. The sound, light as it was, awoke him. The porter's signal. Mathison buried his head deeper into the pillow.

Tap, tap; pause; tap, tap.

"What's wanted?" he called, irritably.

There was no answer. The tapping was not repeated.

He was too drunk with sleep to get the real significance. He turned over and fell asleep again instantly. He came out of this leaden slumber at seven. The train was moving, having made up two hours in the makeshift schedule. The storm outside had lost but little of its vigor. He bathed and dressed and rang for the porter.

"Have the waiter bring me grape-fruit, oatmeal, and coffee."

"Yes, suh."

"What time will we make New York, if this keeps up?"

"About six-thutty."

"Did you rap about one o'clock?"

"No, suh."

"You didn't?"

"No, suh. What's de matter wid dat hotel? Dey all comes rampagin' back befo' yo' did."

"Passengers in number two?"

"Yes, suh."

"*All* the passengers returned?"

"On de Mercutio; yes, suh." The whites of George's eyes began to show.

As for that, so did Mathison's. On board,

when, logically, they should be miles and miles away by this hour, by any means of locomotion they could obtain! Here was a thundering mystery.

"George, is there a lady next door?"

"Yes, suh."

"Beautiful, with blonde hair?"

"Hain't seen de lady's face, suh."

"Sable coat?"

George nodded. He pushed back his cap. "Boss, I oughtn't t' tell yo'; but de man in two is a Secret Service man, an' he's goin' t' jump yo' de minute we gits int' New York State. 'Tain't none o' my business whut yo' done, but I'd kind o' like to give yo' a chance t' beat it. Ef yo' say so, I can open de trap befo' we gits int' Buffalo an' slip yo' out."

"George, you're a top-hole! But how did you learn that this man is a Secret Service agent?"

"He done show me de ca'd signed by Flynn."

"Describe him."

"Big, hair pale yelluh, nice-lookin' an' friendly."

Mathison wondered if he wasn't asleep. With the manila envelope and the red book

in their possession, they were still on the train! What had happened?

"The man has been asking you questions about me?"

"Yes, suh. Count o' dat ca'd I had t' ansuh."

"How does he spend his time?"

"Playin' auction wid two friends. Dey's Secret Service, too," George added, gloomily.

Four of them. And the three men had taken turns, all the way across the continent, in keeping him awake; bribed this porter, too, to keep tabs and report. Until his encounter with The Yellow Typhoon, Mathison had had no real idea of the number or the descriptions of his pursuers. But still on board! That was confounding. It wasn't logical. . . . He stiffened. To kill him, now that he could identify the woman? To swing him off into the dark before he could get his forces together. There was logic in that. He smiled at the porter.

"George, I've an idea there must be a case of mistaken identity in all this. They mistook me at the hotel last night. There was a row, and I came back."

George shifted his cap to his right ear and stared briefly at the slashed kit-bags.

"If I'd have been the man they thought I was I wouldn't be here."

George straightened his cap. There was something in this explanation that pleased him.

"Has the Secret Service man asked my name?"

"No, suh."

"Just as I thought. He's sure I'm the man; just as they were sure at the hotel. Well, I sha'n't worry. Everything will be explained when I reach the Waldorf. You might drop him the hint I'm going there. It will save a lot of trouble. But of course it wouldn't be wise for him to know I told you to tell him."

"I undahstan', suh."

"Then I'll have my breakfast."

On the wall-hook in compartment 6 hung a beautiful rose-kimono. There are thousands upon thousands of these lovely robes. They look exactly alike until you examine them, and then you note that they differ as roses themselves differ.

In compartment 2 there was also a rose-kimono. It was wrapped about the graceful body of The Yellow Typhoon. She

wound a veil about her head, dropping it to the tip of her nose. Then she picked up her dress, her toilet-bag, and started off for the ladies' dressing-room. There wasn't room to dress in the compartment, as the berths had not been made up. She had slept through the major part of the day. She floated past compartment 6, the door of which was slightly ajar. It had been slightly ajar ever since the departure from Chicago.

Fifteen minutes later George, the porter, heard the buzzer. Passenger in 6 was calling. He hurried off. It was George's trysting-hour. Tips.

"The luggage to the trap, please. We wish to leave instantly the train stops at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street."

"Yes'm."

"I note that you wear a Liberty Bond button."

"Yes'm. Got two."

"Then you are a good American?"

"I sho' is, ma'am."

"Very well, then. Here is a box. After the train leaves One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, you will give this box to the gentleman in compartment one. I am trusting

you because I have to. It is military. If you fail to deliver it you betray your country, and in that case woe to you! He will ask you who gave it to you. You will tell him the lady in compartment two."

"Yes'm!" George's tongue had grown suddenly and mysteriously thick and dry.

"And here is something for your trouble."

It was a gold note for fifty dollars. George's brain became nearly as dry as his tongue. Even as he folded the bill and tucked it into a pocket the train began to slow down. He swooped up the luggage and staggered out into the corridor, where he was obliged to hug the partition to permit the lady coming out of the dressing-room to pass. The train stopped. He helped the two women to alight, dumped the luggage, and jumped aboard, dropping the trap and running back to the vacant compartment for the mysterious box. Military! His brain was as full of kinks as his wool. But there was one clear idea in his head—nothing could prevent him delivering this box to the man in compartment 1.

"Fo' de lan' sakes!" he murmured. "Ef dat lady 'ain't went an' fo'got de kimono!"

With the mysterious box under one arm and the rose-kimono under the other, he sallied forth.

Meanwhile, on the platform of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street station, there was enacted a scene of tenderness and animation. The woman who had forgotten her kimono rushed into the arms of another woman, statuesque, white-haired. Her face, alight with joy, was beautiful; but there was a subtle hint that in repose it would be tragic.

"My Hilda! My Hilda!" She spoke in an alien tongue.

"Darling mother!" in the same tongue.

A dapper little man with a Semitic cast of countenance began to dance about the two.

"Here, here. Stop that lingo! It sounds too much like German, and we'll be held up. Mother Nordstrom, you *must* remember!"

"Nonsense, Sammy!" cried the daughter. "You're always such a fussy old dear! Glad to see me?"

"I should say yes! But come along. We've no time to waste."

The quartet—which included the Breton

maid—were soon in the comfortable limousine below.

"My!" said the dapper little man. "You're big medicine to these eyes! Always Johnny on the spot. You're the only woman of the kind."

"It was a narrow squeak this time. Wrecks, delays, snow, and all that."

"How do you feel?" anxiously.

"Splendid!"

"Letter-perfect?"

"Never doubt it! . . . New York! . . . Home! The glorious noise of it! The magnificent hurry! . . . Where are we going to eat?"

"Theater. Everything's ready in the office. You'll have half an hour to doze in. No new people to confuse you; old cast complete. House sold out week in advance. The whole town is on its toes to see you. I am a brute to force you on to-night, without any rest; but you were due three days ago. And say! when I got that cable I swore. Never heard of such a thing. And it turned out to be the most original stunt of the winter. The town swept clean of your photographs and lithos, the papers agreeing not to run Sunday cuts; not even

a tintype in the lobby. And the whole town is crazy to know why. Some little advertising stunt, believe me! Nothing in town but your name on three-sheets and small bills. Hereafter you boss your own publicity campaigns."

A dry little smile stirred the lips of the actress.

"Sarah," said the mother to the Breton maid, "have you taken good care of my Hilda?"

"She's been a trump, mother!" interrupted the daughter.

"But she looks as if she had been ill."

"No, madame . . . the journey . . ." Two faces, thought the maid, so alike that only the good God Himself might distinguish one from the other!

Her mistress leaned back and closed her eyes. The train would be in the tunnel now and the box in Mathison's hands. What would be his wonder? She could only imagine. But she knew that to him she was The Yellow Typhoon, the Snow-leopard, the gambling woman of the Honan Road.

In a little while all these momentous events would become a vague memory to

him. He would shortly be busy with the problems of active warfare. He would never know that a guardian-angel had been at his elbow for days. How easy it was to visualize him!—sitting on the deck beside her chair, that funny little green bird clinging to his shoulder! And then that night, when he told her of his promise to his mother. . . . The tenderness of his voice! "Am I a mollycoddle?" He had asked her that in all seriousness. . . . Boy!

His puzzlement would be large for a while; and out of the chaff of speculation he would find the grain of fact: The Yellow Typhoon, to save herself, had betrayed her companions. Thus Berta would escape prison, perhaps death.

Irony! The same ancient story—Hilda, sacrificing herself for Berta, now as always; throwing away what might have been happiness to prevent the ghost from re-entering the life of the white-haired woman at her side. And she was practically turning Berta loose in New York, where she would be likely to draw a stain across a stainless life. Berta, free, there would soon be strange tales afloat, and each and every one of them would be credited to Norma Farrington.

No matter, so long as the truth could be kept from the mother. The mockery of the grave in Greenwood!

An infinitesimal clue: she had left that because she would not have been human else. There would be one chance in a million of his understanding. A little green feather—Malachi's—which she had picked off the deck one morning. She had hidden it in the little red book. He would find it, but he would not understand. A miracle, nothing short of that; and this was not the day of miracles. . . . Good-by!

As the train drew out of One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street station the blond man returned to No. 2, where he found his companion completely dressed and waiting. She was heavily veiled.

"Where's the keys?"

"Your keys? Oh, there they are. on the berth."

"What was it you wanted?"

"Wanted?" The woman raised the veil above her lips. "I haven't wanted anything."

"But you came and got my keys!"

"I . . . what? I don't know what you

are talking about. I went directly to the dressing-room and came straight back."

"Berta, what nonsense is this? You came for the keys and I gave them to you. Wittel and Franz saw you."

"Karl, you certainly did *not!*" alarmed.

The man stared at her for a space. Then swiftly he knelt before his kit-bag, opened it and rammed his hand to the bottom, plowing about.

"*Gott!*" he whispered, his color fading.

"What has happened?"

"Gone! . . . You devil, what game are you up to?" he cried, springing up. "I warned you once never to play with me. Where is it?"

"Are you mad or am I? . . . I haven't touched that bag. . . . I will kill you if you lay a hand on me! Some one has tricked you. Call the porter."

"Furies of hell! I *saw* you! The rose-kimono; it was *you!*"

"Karl, I tell you it was not I! We have been tricked. Call the porter."

The man opened the door furiously and bumped into George, who was sailing airily along the corridor.

"Come in here!"

George did not like the tone, but he obeyed.

"What's that under your arm?" demanded the woman.

"Kimono. Lady in number six done got off an' fo'got it."

The woman seized it. "Karl, don't you see? It is so nearly like mine it would fool any one! . . . Porter, what was this woman like?"

"Can't say, ma'am. Always wo' a veil. Boss, dat young man nex' do' is goin' t' de Waldorf. I'll be back in a minute fo' de grips an' de kimono."

George backed out diplomatically. He did not like the flavor of the atmosphere; too electrical. Besides, he had a box to deliver. He was plumb in the middle of the war.

"Berta, I don't understand this. I saw *you!* Franz and Wittel will back me!"

With the kimono spread over her knees, The Yellow Typhoon frowned into space.

"Some spy. Saw me somewhere, perhaps back in that hotel. You were playing cards; your scrutiny wouldn't be keen. A bit of court-plaster, a veil, and this kimono . . ."

"The full face, Berta. . . . *Yours!*" ominously.

Mathison had donned his uniform, his greatcoat, packed his kit-bags, and drawn the cotton-flannel bag over Malachi's cage. On his breast was pinned the bit of green ribbon. Presently he heard the signal on the door. George came in.

"A box fo' yo', suh. . . . My lan'!" he broke off.

"What's the matter?" asked Mathison, eying the box curiously.

"Dem regimentals! Is yo' an officer in de *navy?*"

"Yes, George. What's this box? Where did you get it?"

George jerked his thumb toward the partition.

"The woman next door?"

"Yes, suh!"

"She gave it to you for *me?*" astonished beyond measure.

"Yes, suh."

Mathison rubbed his chin. It might be some infernal-machine. Still, it had to be opened. With the lightest touch he untied the string. With a slow, steady pull he drew off the cover. Hypnotized, he stared at the contents. A manila envelope, a little red book . . . and a folded blue-print!

CHAPTER XII

THERE are some astonishments which cannot be translated verbally. So great was Mathison's that he could neither think nor move. The aftermath of a thunderbolt affects you like that. When a certain phase of the hypnosis passed, and Mathison began to get the hang of life again, he became conscious of the porter. He drew out a bill and presented it.

"Thanks. Uncle Sam will be very grateful to you. Any idea what was in this box?"

"De lady said it was military, suh."

Mathison nodded. "The man next door, George, is not a Secret Service man. I'd like to tell you all about it, but the time is too short. By telling him that I'm going straight to the Waldorf you will be doing your Uncle Sam an extra service."

"I told him, Cap'n."

"Good! Send a redcap in when the train stops. Good-by and good luck."

Mathison closed the door and locked it. The little red book he slipped into an inner pocket, the manila envelope he dropped into one of the kit-bags. What he did with the blue-print will be revealed at the proper moment. Then he sat down, his brain beginning to boil with questions. By and by he came to what he believed to be the solution of this miracle. The Yellow Typhoon was afraid. She had betrayed her companions because she saw immunity in the betrayal. She would never receive it from John Mathison, Bob Hallowell's friend! She, too, should pay. All the cards in his hand again, and he would play them on the basis that the phrase "blood and iron" was not pertinent to the Teuton only.

For what had been the primal impetus of this remarkable journey of ten thousand miles, of hiding continually behind steel walls, of refusing to take profit from the vast power at his service? An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth! That he was a secret agent, carrying a tremendous undeveloped sea-offensive—which he still had by the hair—was to his mind, obsessed with a single idea, an affair of secondary importance.

Draw the hand strongly across the surface of the water. What happens? A wave, that follows irresistibly, fatefully, inescapably. This was, then, primarily a man-hunt, played backward, probably as peculiar a man-hunt as was ever conceived. The pursuers were in reality the pursued. Being a good psychologist, Mathison had simply put himself back of his enemies' point of view. In their minds, who would be the logical messenger? John Mathison, transferred to European waters, the familiar friend of the inventor, the one man living who knew exactly what the invention in its entirety was. This established in their minds, there were ninety-nine chances in a hundred that they would follow him. And there was always the possibility that Paolo, the Spanish servant, had conveyed enough scraps of information to decide them.

Had he been only vaguely certain that they carried the blue-print, Mathison would have used his power and struck immediately after the sleep-fume attack the first night on shore. But, he had argued, supposing he struck and the print was not found? They would be liberated; forewarned, they would vanish. He hadn't credited them

with the stupidity of carrying so dangerous a thing as that blue-print. In their place he would have mailed it from San Francisco, with absolute certainty that it would reach the hands intended. There was no censorship over national mail. And now that the print was in his possession, he never could prove that it had actually been in theirs.

For the real point was to secure evidence, of which to date he had not an iota, not such as would pass muster in any court outside of Germany. To have the blond man and his companions arrested as matters now stood would be a waste of time. So his whole plan was to lure them to a point where the hand of the law could touch and *hold*. An overt act, culpable legally. And The Yellow Typhoon herself had restored the means.

There was still one puzzle—the woman's lack of curiosity. She had not opened the envelope. Had she declared to the blond man that she had not found it? It would not be stating it strong enough to say that she was the most baffling woman he had ever met; he had never *read* of one her match.

At length Mathison and redcap swung along with the crowd making for the gates. Just beyond the gates Mathison signaled to the redcap to pause. He felt a hand on his arm, but he did not turn his head.

"Mathison?" came in a whisper.

"Yes. The blond man with the ruddy cheeks. The woman behind him in the sables. Follow and report to your chief." Mathison went on.

Quarter of an hour later he entered the Waldorf. This time he seemed indifferent to the kit-bags. The boy deposited them along with the cage in front of the desk. Mathison signed the register, opened one of the kit-bags, and took out the manila envelope, which, before leaving the Philippines, he had been warned solemnly to guard with his life.

"Please deposit this in your safe and give me a receipt." Mathison spoke calmly, but his heart pounded with suppressed excitement. Carelessly, in view of any who cared to see, he stuffed the receipt into the little pocket at the top of his trousers. Then he went up to his room. He set Malachi on a stand by the radiator. He emptied the

kit-bags and distributed the contents into drawers and closets.

Afraid. The Yellow Typhoon was afraid! Or was it Hallowell!—a touch of remorse?

He sat down and opened the little red book for some addresses Morgan had given him. And something fluttered to his knee. It was a blue-green feather, brilliant as an emerald. Malachi's; he was always finding Malachi's feathers. But the sight of this one recalled a promise he had made himself—to call up Mrs. Chester's apartment. If he had to sail before she returned, he would leave Malachi with the apartment people. So he stuffed the feather absently into his match-pocket. Later he sent many messages over the telephone.

He felt in his pockets for his fountain-pen and, not finding it, remembered that he hadn't taken it from the vest of his civilian suit. Naturally, he went through all the pockets, and among other things came upon a folded slip of glazed paper. He opened it.

Several minutes passed. Mathison was like stone. Norma Farrington. He saw now why the photograph had originally intrigued him. It resembled Morgan's description of the woman known as The Yel-

low Typhoon! . . . Absurd! It was not within reason. Some twist, some legerdemain the photograph had given it. The shadows; these had something to do with it. Norma Farrington, The Yellow Typhoon? The absurdity was patent. The notorious woman of Honan Road could not possibly be a celebrity on Broadway. Too many miles between.

He sprang to the telephone. "Give me the theater-ticket agency. . . . Hello! Is Norma Farrington playing in town? . . . She *is?* . . . What theater? . . . Thanks!" Mathison got out the little red book with trembling fingers. He rang up a number. "This is Mathison, the green ribbon. What's the report on the woman in the sables? . . . All right. I'll hold the wire." Five minutes passed. "Hello! . . . Entered a house in Fiftieth Street? Fine!" Mathison consulted the time; it was seven-fifty.

He became a whirlwind. He flew downstairs and plunged toward the revolving doors.

"Taxi!"

The vehicle was forthcoming instantly, due to his visored cap, gold bands, and star. He jumped into the taxi, naming a theater

up-town. He paid a speculator five dollars for the only seat left—Q, center. As he was late, he had to navigate through channels of reluctant feet. Norma Farrington! He had only one idea with four sides to it—something complete.

The footlights flashed. When the curtain rolled up there were three people on the stage—no one he had ever seen before. They moved about and talked. Occasionally a ripple of laughter ran over the house. But none of these things meant anything to Mathison. He was not conscious of a word that was spoken or the significance of a single movement.

There were four entrances to this stage living-room, and Mathison grew dizzy trying to watch all four at once. At eight-forty, through the French window—you saw a charming garden beyond—came a woman in gray. Her expression was demure—mischievously demure. The audience broke into applause. Tense, Mathison strained his ears.

Outside the blond man waited with the patience of his breed. His glance never left the entrance to the theater.

CHAPTER XIII

AS soon as the curtain fell Mathison stood up and plowed his way out to the aisle. Once in the aisle, he rushed to the foyer, where he demanded the way to the managerial office. His uniform was open sesame.

The producing manager, a dapper, bright-eyed Jew, happened to be in, and he was outlining a campaign for his press agent when Mathison burst in.

"I am Lieutenant-Commander John Mathison," he announced, a bit out of breath for his run up the stairs.

"What's the difficulty?" asked the manager, coolly. "Anchor afoul my unlighted sign?"

Mathison laughed. He understood at once that here was a good sport. "Pardon my abruptness," he apologized. "I'd like to use your telephone."

The manager waved his hand. He heard Mathison's side of the conversation.

"Mathison. What's the report from Fiftieth Street? . . . The woman still inside? Thanks. . . . No, that's all." Mathison hung up the receiver dreamily.

"What's happened?" asked Rubin, ironically. "Have we sunk the German fleet?"

"We are going to," said Mathison. "I want a messenger the quickest way I can get him."

"War stuff?" thrilled in spite of his resentment at the intrusion. Rubin was an autocrat in the theatrical world.

"Well, I don't believe you'd call it that. I want to get some flowers."

The manager sank back. "You sailors! I thought maybe a submarine was loose outside!" He was going to add a sting, when a boot came into contact with his shin, a sign that the alert press agent had something on his mind. "Flowers!"

"I have come ten thousand miles to send these flowers," replied Mathison, smiling.

"Get a head usher, Klein," said the manager, secretly bubbling. What a humdinger for the morning papers! As the press agent vanished, Rubin turned to Mathison. "You may send flowers, but not across the lights. I will not break that rule for anybody."

"So long as she gets them. May I write a note?"

The manager got up and indicated his chair. "Write as many as you like. I take it that the flowers are for Miss Farrington."

"They are."

"Do you know her?" curiously.

"I do." The smile was still on Mathison's lips.

"In that case, go ahead. But if it happens that she doesn't recall you, your posies will go directly to the ash-can. She isn't easy to know."

"I know her," insisted Mathison.

"I rather wish, though, that you would put this off until to-morrow night. Miss Farrington will be very tired. She's done a fine and generous thing—gone on without rest, after an unbroken journey from the other side of the world."

"No one is better aware of that than I. She will see me."

Rubin knew confidence when he saw it. He twisted his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other. A vigorous, unusual chap, this, and handsome enough to wake up The Farrington. Ten thousand miles! Her aloofness toward men was now ac-

counted for. An old affair nobody had heard of. There was an ominous portent in this affair for Broadway. She was the loyalest of the loyal; she'd stick to her contract. But after!

Mathison settled down to his note. Each time he balled up a piece of paper and flung it into the waste-basket Rubin frowned.

The press agent came storming back, an usher in tow. The latter was given fifty dollars and ordered to purchase Parma violets.

"No tinfoil, no tinsel strings, no bouquet; loose, as they came from the soil. Carry this note and the flowers to Miss Farrington's dressing-room. And here is something for your trouble." To the manager he said, "Thanks for your courtesy."

"You're as welcome as the spring."

"Oh, boy!" cried the press agent as the door closed behind Mathison. "In a dead world like this! A real yarn, no faking. Did you lamp the roll he dragged out? That was real money, all yellows. Think of it! Our Norma, a navy man, ten thousand miles, flowers, a wad of yellows! She'll set up a holler. Pass the buck to me. I'll be the goat with the cheerfulest smile ever!"

"Klein, we sha'n't use this."

"What?" barked the press agent.

"No. It's real. This is no Johnny. Norma is no chorus beauty. Of course, I jumped at the idea, but we'll have to pass it up. I wouldn't lose Norma's genuine affection for me for a million three-sheets, free of charge. No. Lock it up and forget it."

"Well, what do you know about that?"

Mathison returned to his seat, apologizing to every one so courteously and agreeably that even the men forgave him. He was quite calm now. All incertitude was gone; he *knew*. The Yellow Typhoon was in a house in Fiftieth Street, and Norma Farrington was yonder on the stage, delighting his eyes, thrilling his ears. The wonder of her! God bless her, she had tried to save Bob Hallowell that night! And he would never have known but for that posed photograph!

She did not wear any of the flowers in the second act, nor in the third; but when she came on in the fourth she carried a small bouquet in her corsage. She was Joyousness. It radiated from her into the audience. Faces all over the house were beam-

Hilda was standing in the doorway, struck by that hypnosis with which sudden tragedy always benumbs us.

ing, not with merriment, but with good humor.

There came a little moment when throats became stuffy—one of those flashes of tenderness whose link is generally laughter. When the whole house was watching the *comédienne* tensely, in absolute silence, Mathison laughed aloud, joyously! Heads swinging resentfully in his direction woke him up. His cheeks flushed.

Doubtless by this time you have formed the impression that Mathison had lost his compass, that he was drifting, that he had forgotten the vital business which had brought him all these thousands of miles. Nothing could be farther from the truth. All these little eddies, currents, whirlpools were at the sides of the stream, that flowed on, impervious, inevitable.

For a man whose soul was in haste he took his time. His movements within the theater and outside in the lobby were leisurely. On the street he made no effort to bore through. But when he reached the corner he was off like a shot toward the dark alley which led to the stage door. This he plunged through recklessly—into the arms of the ancient Cerberus who tended the door.

"Outside, outside! The comic opera has went!"

Mathison presented his card. "Miss Farrington is expecting me."

"Oh, she is, huh? Well, she said nothin' to me about it."

"I'll wait."

"You're welcome; but in the alley, admiral, in the alley. Nobody gits by me to-night, comin' in. Orders."

"I don't suppose ten dollars would interest you in the least."

"Not unless I *saw* it. Honest, now, are you meetin' Miss Farrington?"

"I am. I'll be peaceful, Tirpitz; but if you send for the stage-hands, I'm likely to shoot up the place."

"All right. I'll take it in two fives."

Mathison discovered that he was now free to walk about as he pleased, so long as he did not amble in the direction of the dressing-rooms. He anchored himself by the wall, from where he could see all who came down the narrow iron staircase. The draughty, musty, painty odors were to him like perfumed amber from Araby.

By and by two women came down. They went past Mathison without taking any

notice of him. They were followed shortly by a man whom Mathison recognized as the conceited ass who made love to Miss Farrington in the play.

A row of lights overhead went out. The stage was now in a kind of twilight. I wonder if there is a sadder place than a stage when the actors have left it to the tender mercies of scene-shifters, carpenters, and electricians? To Mathison it was only the door to Ali Baba's cave.

At length—thirty minutes, to be exact—a woman came down the stairs slowly. A veil was wrapped about her face and hair. But Mathison would have recognized that sable coat anywhere. He stepped forward shakily and took off his cap.

"I suppose it's still snowing outside?" casually.

"What we sailors call thick weather." No questions; just an ordinary, every-day query about the weather. No confusion. "You are not afraid to shake hands?"

"I don't know just what to do."

"Oh, I'd return the hand." His laughter rocked the lurking echoes above.

And something in that laughter made her afraid of him, of herself.

"Where in the world did you find all those violets—loose, the way I love them?" She did not give him time to answer. "My car is at the end of the alley. Where shall we go? I'm going to give you a half-hour. . . . I suppose it was written."

"That I should find you? Yes."

"I like the way you say that." Had the porter betrayed her? And yet the porter could not have betrayed anything beyond the fact that she, not Berta, had given him that box. Some unforeseen stroke of luck; certainly not that feather. He was no brother to the Cumæan Sibyl. Still, he had found her. She was tremendously curious to learn how. On the other hand, she was determined to ask him no questions and, as adroitly as she could, evade his. If he persisted, she would cut the meeting short. Some day—if she ever saw him again—she would tell him the story. She was too weary to-night. She was at once happy and miserable; happy because it was as though his finding her had been written, miserable because the sordid dénouement might break at any moment. To save Berta, not for Berta's sake, but for the mother's.

She knew that she was beautiful, that she possessed extraordinary talent in attracting men, though she had never used it. She knew what power lay in expression, in vocal music. She might have made this man love her. For if he had not been drawn to her through some mysterious forces, why had he sought her? Those flowers! There were gall and wormwood in this cup, but she drank it with a smile. Romance, and she must let it go by!

What had he learned within these four short hours? That she was not The Yellow Typhoon, certainly. Had there been a cable from that man Morgan, after his solemn promise? The gray wig and the goggles . . .

"What did you say?"

"That we had better be moving. You take me wherever you think best."

"Give me your arm. It will be slippery in the alley. There's an umbrella in the corner by the door. Take it."

Outside, he put up the umbrella; and as she took his arm she knocked against something heavy and hard in his pocket.

"What is that?"

"Part of a sailor's paraphernalia."

"It is not over yet?" with sudden suspicion.

"No. There are a few threads that need picking up."

The metal in his voice did not escape her. She was puzzled, for, logically, all his land adventures should be over.

It was only a short distance to the restaurant, which was a famous one.

She selected it tactfully, solely on his account. She herself had never been inside of it before in the evening. But she knew a good deal about men, that even so nice a one as this fresh-skinned, blue-eyed sailorman would not object to having his vanity played up to. There was another kind of thought besides in her mind. The night would be far more memorable if there was a background of color and movement and music. She was weak enough to want him always to remember this night.

The moment she took off her veil and coat she was recognized. That is the penalty of theatrical fame in New York. The head waiter passed the word, and the people at the near-by tables stared and whispered; and Mathison wouldn't have been human if he had not expanded a little

under this patent interest in his lovely companion.

How was he to know that the gown she wore had been donned expressly for him? How was he to know that it had been sent for after the arrival of the flowers, or that she had worried all through the performance for fear her mother would send the wrong one, or that it might reach the theater too late?

Later, Mathison could not have told whether she wore green or blue or red. No normal man would have paid any attention to her gown—with her face, her eyes, her lips to watch.

Their orders scandalized the waiter. Miss Farrington ordered two apples and Mathison a bowl of bread and milk. They laughed.

"That's all I ever eat at night—fruit."

"And I didn't come here to eat," he said.

About this time the blond man, occupied by a single idea, entered the restaurant lobby, gave his hat and coat to the check-boy, then walked out to the curb and approached the footman.

"Dismiss Miss Farrington's limousine. She will go home with us."

"Yes, sir." The footman went down to execute the order.

The blond man waited until he saw the gray limousine maneuver out of the line and swing into the street; then he returned for his hat and coat. The Farrington was nothing to him. He had never heard of her until to-night. Ordinarily he might have been curious enough to have had her pointed out. To-night such curiosity might dissipate his cleverly conceived plans. Perhaps Mathison had not seen him actually. Anyhow, he did not intend to risk the future to satisfy a curiosity which was only negligible. If he had looked into that dining-room, it is quite possible this tale would have had a different ending. As matters stood, he had reason to be grateful to the actress. She had opened a way for him. A man with a pretty woman in his charge would not be particularly keen mentally.

"Did you like the play?"

Mathison shook his head.

"You didn't like it?" astonished.

"I'll see it before I sail."

"Then you weren't in the theater to-night?"

"Oh yes; in Q. I was the ass who laughed out loud when the whole house was so still you could have heard a pin drop."

"You? . . . I heard that, and wondered what had happened. But if you saw the play . . ."

"That's just the point. I wasn't an audience; I was a spectator."

Something in his eyes, a lurking fire, warned her not to press in this direction. After all, he had not come to see the play; he had come to see her. And the knowledge was like the warmth from a wood fire.

"A sailorman! No doubt a girl in every port."

"No." Without vehemence. "The same girl in every port, in the fire, in the moon-mists; the girl who has been in my heart since I was a boy."

"Oh." A little dagger-stab in her heart. "Then you have come back to marry before you go across?"

"Quite likely."

"Love, marriage, off to the wars! . . . What is she like?"

"Petrol on water."

She stared blankly.

"If you have never seen wide spreads of petrol on a smooth sea," he explained, "then you have missed something indescribably beautiful. Fire! Dawns, sun-

sets, moonlight; all the flashing gems in the world, moving, circling, advancing, retreating. The soul of a woman should be like that."

"Are you a poet?"

"Possibly, but inarticulate. I don't know one rhyme from another."

"But poetry isn't rhyme. Your description of oil on water is poetry."

He laughed. "If the wardrooms ever find that out, I'm done for." The glory of her! All his life he had been dreaming of an hour like this.

A pause followed. His utter lack of inquisitiveness intrigued her beyond expression. Not a word about how he had found her. Not a word about the Adventure. Why? What kind of a man was he, that he could sit opposite her without deluging her with questions? And he had a right to know many things. She had given him one opening without meaning to—the query relative to the automatic in his pocket. Why hadn't he taken advantage of it?"

She broke the silence and led him into the war; but after a few phrases he veered away from this. He spoke of the snow, how he longed for the north country of late, how

he had grown weary for the need of cold, lashing winds and the smell of snow.

When she could stand it no longer she said, "Tell me by what magic you found me!"

"I'm a queer codger. I have a strange memory for sounds. Possibly because I've lived much in the open. My leaves were generally spent in the jungles. Foliage moving—I can tell almost instantly whether it is the wind or animal life. The same with the crackling of a twig. Sometimes the recurrence of a sound confuses me. There may be some difficulty in placing it. But I know I have heard the sound before."

Then he produced the photograph. She stared at it bewilderedly. Sound? What *was* he talking about?

"You found me by that? But you did not *hear* that!"

"Still, it recalled a sound."

Her glance fell on the photograph again. She had forgotten the posing for it. This was not the sort of dénouement she wanted; he had found her quite ordinarily. Yet she could not make him out. This was not the man she had known on the *Nippon Maru*, the boy who had been like crystal

or an open book. This was an inscrutable stranger, of velvet and steel.

"I begin to understand," she said. She felt the mantle of weariness falling again on her shoulders. The hide-and-seek of the encounter irked her. Why didn't he speak, demand questions, satisfy her curiosity? She was very tired. He would never know how much awake she had been on that journey. She had walked the car corridors at all hours; she had watched for Berta to pass the crack in the door until the concentration had made her dizzy. She was tired, and she hadn't the power to resist her own curiosity. She flung open Bluebeard's door recklessly. "I begin to understand."

"What?"

"Why you were sent on this hazardous mission. You are quite sufficient unto yourself. I believed I was doing a fine, brave thing."

"Ah, but it was a fine, brave thing. You made it possible for me to go on. Secret service!"

"It would be useless to deny it." She leaned on her elbows, locking her ringless fingers under her chin. "It's not generally

known, but I am of Danish stock. I came to America when I was very little. I spoke no English. There were lean years; yes, even poverty. But I had a little talent—the faculty of making people smile. Not all aliens are ungrateful. This is now my country. I love it!" Her eyes flashed. "It made me all I am, gave me all I have. It has been glorious to me. Long ago I vowed if ever the chance came I would pay back these benefactions—with my life if need be!"

Mathison's conduct was logical enough. All he had wanted was to see her, hear her voice for a little while, get one absolute fact, a fact she could not withhold from him, being unaware of what he was seeking. He would satisfy his curiosity, disperse these mysteries, after his work was done. Before this night was over one of two things was going to happen. He was going to succeed or he was going to be badly hurt. He now had a tolerably keen insight into the character of this glorious woman. She was brave and resourceful. The slightest hint of what was on foot and she might seek to intervene, with the best of intentions, and spoil everything. But day after

to-morrow—when he returned from Washington!

"It is very wonderful to be here to-night," he said.

After that her heart grew warm again. She, too, knew the value of sounds. At least he was grateful. That weapon in his pocket—she longed to ask him about that. But a question here might alarm him. He must not suspect the plan she had in her head. Logically the great adventure was at an end; but they may have threatened his life. She stood up.

"I'm a brute!" he cried, contritely. "I forgot that you must be weary beyond measure."

He held the sable coat for her, particularly careful not to touch her. As she was wrapping the veil about her hair and face he asked if he might come to tea the day after.

"I'll tell you. In a little while I shall be in the thick of it. I may not come back. In my room at the hotel I've a little Rajputana parrakeet—green as an emerald. Fact is, he's the only pal I have to-day. He hates the sea. May I give him to you?"

She trembled. "To me?" Malachi!

"Yes—that is, if you'd like him. He talks. Wait." He fumbled about in a pocket. "Here's a little feather of his. It will give you an idea of what a brilliant color he has. May I give him to you?"

"Yes!" The blood whipped into her throat. The girl he saw in every port: what about her? Why didn't he offer the bird to her? . . . That feather! It wasn't humanly possible that he understood and was playing with her.

Truth is he was thousands of miles away from the message. But there were other roads to Rome; and he knew what he knew.

"Then I may come to tea day after tomorrow?"

"Yes," She turned away from the table. Upon reaching the curb she wheeled upon Mathison. "My car!" she cried, dismayed.

"What's the matter?"

"It isn't here!"

Mathison hailed the footman. "What has become of Miss Farrington's car?"

"Why, sir, she gave orders to dismiss it!"

Mathison returned to Miss Farrington. "Some mistake. They've dismissed it."

"Taxi, sir?" said a man at Mathison's elbow.

"Yes. Here, Miss Farrington; jump into this. Day after to-morrow at four. Good night."

"But you are coming with me!"

"No."

"I say yes!"

"No."

"Then I'll walk to the Subway—four blocks. I shall ruin my dress, my shoes, and my temper. I am going to take you back to the hotel."

The last place in the world Mathison intended going at this hour. The devil and the deep blue sea! He was confident that she would do just as she threatened—walk. But this he knew: the moment he entered this taxi it would become a trap—a trap he would jump into with the greatest cheerfulness, alone. What to do? He could not give her any warning, with the strange chauffeur's ear scarcely a foot off. And under no circumstances must the blond man see Norma Farrington's face this night.

"A compromise," he said, believing he had found a solution to the difficulty. "I'll go with you if you will let me take you home first."

"Agreed!" she cried, readily. She smiled

in the dark of the cab. This was exactly what she wanted. Once at the apartment, she would discharge this taxi and order one she was tolerably sure of.

He laughed and sprang into the cab. The snow was coming down thickly. Corners were dim; the street-lamps hung in a kind of pearly twilight. A strange silence fell upon them.

I don't suppose either of them marked the turns. Perhaps the impenetrable haze had something to do with it. You are not ordinarily attracted by nebulous objects. Again, it might have been due to the fact that they were both fatalists. Suddenly the cab stopped with a slewing jerk. The door opened. The man who opened it presented his arm stiffly. Neither Miss Farrington nor Mathison had to be informed regarding that blue-black bit of metal at the end of that arm. She shrank back, but not in fear. Her idea was to give Mathison all the elbow room he might require.

"Step out, both of you, with your hands up—quickly!"

CHAPTER XIV

"DO what you think best," she murmured across Mathison's shoulder. "Please do not consider me at all."

But Mathison stepped out tamely, his hands above his head. She followed, slightly chilled. Her arms hung at her side. This was not quite as she would have had it. Why didn't he attempt to distract the man with the automatic—arguments, protests, threats? There was always a chance. She was not afraid of pistol-shots, and he ought to know that. Chilled and disappointed, she stood beside him.

"The lady will put up her hands also." Nothing of the speaker's face could be seen, only his pale-blue eyes, which snapped frostily over the rim of the black handkerchief.

"The lady will do nothing of the kind, for the obvious reason that the cut of her coat will not permit it."

Mathison tightened his lips. Unafraid!

"Brandt!"

The chauffeur jumped down from the taxicab.

"Search them for weapons."

The chauffeur rifled Mathison's pockets, and tossed the heavy Colt to his superior. Then he seized Miss Farrington by the arm. He started to run his free-hand over her, when she struck his cheek with a lively report.

"No man shall touch me like that!"

Mathison intervened. "Just a moment. I'll keep my hands up, but on condition that no indignity shall be offered this lady. Otherwise you will have to shoot me."

"No indignity will be offered the lady. So far as I am concerned, she does not exist. Her word that she is unarmed, and no one shall touch her."

"I give it." A diversion for his sake, and he had not taken profit! What was the meaning of this singular tameness?

"March up those steps, both of you. The lady will have to share your luck until it is advisable to release you. March!"

Mathison put his arm under Miss Farrington's and helped her up the icy steps.

In the faintest whisper: "Do not lift up your veil while in this house. There is danger. Do not speak unless I give you the lead."

The door opened to admit them and they stood in a dimly lighted hallway.

"The parlor; you will find it comfortable."

Inside the parlor Mathison was ordered to halt. With a detached air he obeyed. Miss Farrington shuddered. She saw the man in the black handkerchief search the little pocket at the top of Mathison's trousers and extract a bit of paper, folded. What was it?

"A long chase, but we are patient. The receipt! . . . Yankee swine!" The man struck Mathison across the mouth, stepped back quickly, the automatic ready.

Mathison did not stir, but his tan faded; and presently a thin trickle of blood ran down his chin.

"You despicable coward!" she cried. "How like the Hun!"

"Be silent! Your immunity is not irrevocable."

A receipt of deposit! She understood now. A receipt of deposit for that manila envelope. To have come all this way, and

then lose! And it came to her like a blow that she herself was directly the cause. He had not wanted to get into the taxi, and she had forced him. In trying to save him she had merely led him to defeat. But the tameness, when she knew that he was quick as light!

"You will be detained about an hour. A telephone-call will release you. Madame, my thanks. You made everything very easy for us. Without your innocent assistance there might have been difficulties. Unwittingly, you have entered the war zone, with casualties."

Then, with an ironical wave of the hand, the man in the black handkerchief stepped forth and closed the door.

Mathison pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his lips, turning gradually so that his back was toward the double doors.

"I could cry!" she said. "All my fault!"

Mathison laid a warning finger on his bruised lips. Instinctively he knew that he was being watched. The affair wasn't over yet

"Please don't feel badly. The fortunes of war. The thing is done. Don't bother any more about it."

"But you wouldn't have surrendered like this if I hadn't been with you!"

"I'd have put up some kind of a scrap, I suppose. I should have kept my head, and didn't."

"But through fault of mine . . ."

"It might have been worse," he interrupted. "They didn't hurt you. I'll be given my destroyer. I'm a good navigator. Better take off your coat; otherwise you will feel it when you go out." He laid his hands on her shoulders—and whispered: "Be on your guard! They must not know that you know. Follow my leads. They are watching or listening."

"I'll keep the coat on." She sat down, trembling.

He began to walk about. From time to time he touched his lips with his handkerchief.

She watched him. All through the night he had puzzled her as no man had ever puzzled her before. She knew that he was strong, resourceful, courageous. And yet he had taken that blow on the mouth without comment, without a sign of wrath. Resourceful, he had carried that receipt with him. Her fault, directly and indirectly.

His discovery that Norma Farrington—Hilda Nordstrom—and The Yellow Typhoon were two individuals had befogged his foresight. He had probably dashed out of the hotel with no thought but of finding her. It would have been the simplest thing in the world to leave the receipt in the key-box. Beaten because of her!

"Think of finding you!" he said. He covered the length of the room again. "No doubt you think I'm a queer codger. The fact is I never waste time or energy in wailing. When I lose I pay. When I win I pocket the stakes. I never drop out of a game, once I take up the cards." He sat down beside her. "Do you believe in love at first sight?"

Good Heavens! But she managed to say, calmly, "In a play?" She lifted the veil to the tip of her nose. "Oh yes. It goes very well that way." A cue? Very good; she would follow up this bewildering lead, even if her heart did begin to act queerly.

"I mean in real life."

"I never fell in love with any one off-stage; so I'm not in a position to speak. The trouble with me is I have a fatal gift

of reading men at a glance. I have always revolted at the idea of marrying a man I knew all about on my wedding-day. He must be a fine story-book—to be read a page at a time, to offer a mystery tantalizing enough to create a longing to solve it. And if I ever do marry I shall go on with my work. Why? Because I shall always be puzzling him just a little. In marriage absolute knowledge always makes for dullness."

Of all the amazing, heartrending subjects to select! And she could not tell him that he was hurting her dreadfully. . . . His poor lips! All her fault.

That voice! he thought. In his ears it was sweeter than the intoning of choirs in cathedrals. He glanced at his wrist-watch. Probably the man was at the desk, presenting the receipt. God send he did not pass the job on to a confederate! In twenty minutes, perhaps, the call would come for their release. Mathison ran his tongue over his throbbing lips. Then he smiled—a smile through which his teeth flashed whitely.

She, watching him, waited for him to carry on. His bent head was so close that

it was hard to resist that old inclination—to touch it with her hand. All this talk about love! . . . He was merely passing the time. But when she saw that smile her eyes widened behind her veil. It was a terrible smile, savage, relentless, and *confident!*

And then, in one of those blinding ribbons of light that flash across the storms, she saw distinctly the meaning of the whole affair. Each time the recollection of the manila envelope returned to her mind fog enshrouded it. She could see nothing but a childish whim in the superscriptions and decorations. His own name and rank sprawled across the middle and a photograph at each end—of himself in mufti and uniform. The Machiavellian cunning of it! Boy! Would she ever be able to call him that again? She thrilled.

"What shall I call you? Lieutenant-commander is so formal and Mister is an abomination."

"Call me John. My mother thought it a good name."

"Not Jack?"

"Too many Jacks in the navy. I'd like very much if you'd call me John."

"Mathison. I believe for the present I'll call you Mathison. That's comrade-y. And day after to-morrow we shall have tea together."

"And I'll bring Malachi. But I warn you he swears dreadfully sometimes, when he's happy."

"I'd love him!" She laughed. A few moments ago she hadn't believed she could ever laugh again joyously. After all, what did her affairs amount to in this great game? She was an infinitesimal grain of sand, inconsiderable. A trap for his enemy, and she had almost spoiled it. And casually he had said he had a few loose threads to pick up!

She was reasonably certain now that all recollection of the old lady on the *Nippon Maru* had passed from his mind. Why not? Why should a young man of thirty keep fresh in his memory an old woman ostensibly sixty? He had found Hilda Nordstrom, and that was sufficient for the present.

"Did I see the red and blue lights of a drug-store down the street as we came along?"

"I don't remember."

The double doors rolled back smoothly and The Yellow Typhoon stepped into the room, sending the doors shut again. She leaned with her back against one of the doors, and the crooked smile on her lips almost hid the little mole.

Mathison was on his feet immediately, his nerves singing. All along he had expected such a moment; and yet, now that it had come, it stupefied him. He stood so that he partially covered Miss Farrington. He wondered if any man had ever before been confronted by such a situation. He managed to throw a bit of gallantry into his bow.

"And how is the jealous husband tonight?"

"He is doing nicely at this moment, thank you. You and the lady are free to go."

"Ah!"

Mathison started to turn, but stopped, fascinated by the singular change which was passing over the face of the woman in front of him. Slowly her hands reached out on each side, fingers spread; her body seemed to shrink.

"*Hilda?*"

CHAPTER XV

MATHISON stepped aside, not only physically, but figuratively. He saw that for a little while he was to be an outsider. There was a strange tragedy here, and it was going to be threshed out immediately. The attitude of the two women was a dead reckoning that there were accounts to settle. Already they seemed to have forgotten him.

Of course he had known, or at least suspected, that these two remarkable women were sisters—twins. From the moment he had discovered that posed photograph, located The Yellow Typhoon in this very house, established the fact that Norma Farrington was acting on the stage that night, he had known.

From where he stood, ill at ease and restless, he could see the two faces. So alike that, separately, it was impossible to tell which was which or that there were two.

Witness his own adventures in that hotel room. The detective had declared that two women had mounted that fire-escape because he had seen nothing but footprints. But the two together, as Mathison now saw them! The one with the white soul of her shining in her face; the other—a sphinx. Hilda—he would never think of her as Norma again—a white page with a beautiful poem written thereon; the other, a page with a cryptogram. A miracle; he could call it nothing else; a physical allegory, the good fairy and the bad. The forest pool that slaked your thirst; the lying mirage of the desert. And yet the mirage was no less glorious to the eye than the honest pool. He knew he would never again mistake the one for the other.

The shock over, the reality confirmed, The Yellow Typhoon gathered her shattered forces. She folded her arms, and her body seemed to expand.

"Hilda! . . . Well, why not? I knew that if I returned to New York our paths would cross again. I did not will it. But what will be will be. Always meddling, always trying to thwart me!"

"Yes, Berta; the same old Hilda, always

bearing the brunt of your misdeeds, always sacrificing herself to shield you . . . to save the mother a hurt. For what I did never hurt her; she loved you, tolerated me. And the bitter irony of it all lies in the fact that she would have stood away from you but for my sacrifices, which misled her. Yes, I am Hilda."

"You!" rasped Berta. "It was you, then, who wore that kimono! You, turned Yankee swine!"

"I, who have sworn loyalty to the land you would betray. I tried to save you, but you would not have it."

"Save me? On the contrary, your safety depends upon my good nature. I hold you and this mollycoddle in the palm of my hand. Take care!"

"You never could frighten me, Berta. You know that. Eight years! Do you realize that you have been dead eight years?"

"There are many kinds of death—some of our own choosing," said Berta, insolently.

"I mean the dead who never more return. Eight years ago the mother and I buried you in Greenwood."

"What?" explosively. "What are you telling me?"

"The Berta who was found in the river, recognizable only by the dress she wore and the locket. And every spring the mother goes there with flowers. Your ghost is not pleasant to see, Berta. The horror of that night in Shanghai, when I learned the truth, that you were alive, notorious! The owner of a gambling-house in the Honan Road! Nightmare! Who was it we buried?" Hilda stepped forward menacingly.

Fine steel and hammered brass, thought Mathison. He could not touch the woman of brass now; she was Hilda's sister, and Hilda should say what should be done. Nor could he smother the spark of admiration. Bad she might be, ruthless and predatory, but she was no weakling. Whatever her end, she would meet it hotly. He saw that Hallowell had been stronger than Samson, since this Delilah had not shorn his locks.

Sisters who had not seen each other in eight years—deadly antagonists! He could not help philosophizing a little over this phenomenon of life. Sisters and brothers; the long roll of bitter tragedies from the day Cain grew jealous of Abel! He wished he was elsewhere. It was sacrilege to witness the baring of two souls.

"Who was it we buried?" repeated Hilda.

Berta frowned. Eight years, a long time to remember the trivial incidents associated with the abandonment of her people. All at once her eyes flashed and a corner of her lip went up in a twisted smile. "I remember now. I gave the old clothes and the locket to a creature on the street. So she killed herself, and I am dead! No wonder you left me in peace!"

"Thief!" cried Hilda, flaming. "You cold-blooded thief! You took the last jewel that mother had and pawned it—the jewel she had been clinging to desperately—the last link to the life she had known. The tragedy was nothing to you. You pawned it to buy a new dress, a new hat. What was her love for you? Something for you to prey upon; and, having preyed upon the last morsel, you took wing, like the kite you are! I discovered what had become of the jewel. Without her knowing it, I worked nights for months to reclaim it. Then I 'found' it. I would waste my breath if I cried '*Shame!*'"

"Then don't waste your breath, Hilda. Shame? I am my father's daughter, and I take what pleases me when and where I

find it. I ran away because I was tired of poverty, tired of you all. I hated you because you were always whining at my elbow not to do this and not to do that. Fine music! We were born in an hour of hate and terror. I am the daughter of my father, a noble; you are the daughter of a Copenhagen circus-rider. I am a law unto myself, and you are the puppet of circumstances. Love my mother? Love anything? I don't know. But I have avenged her. I have made mankind pay for the blows my father dealt her. And I never forgave her for not claiming her rights when father died. We might have grown up in comfort, and her stupid pride kept us in rags. I did not ask to be born; my birth was not my will. Flesh and blood? What is life but an accident? Selfish? Who would look out for Berta but Berta? I am myself, no more, no less; and the path I travel is of my own choosing. Life! I have lived. No law can take that away from me. You have called me the kite. What is the kite but cousin to the eagle? Look back. Did I ever cringe, whine? If a blow was struck, did I not always strike back? The fault is you were always trying to pour me into

another mold. I had already been poured. What you wanted of me was something like this fool parrakeet—something content to live in a cage. Not for Berta Nordstrom! I don't know what my end shall be, but it will be a free end."

A wave of pity surged over Mathison. For Hilda's sake he had contemplated letting this wild, untamed thing go; and now for the same reason he would not dare let her go. There was a chill of fear, too. There was no knowing how far this rising fury might carry The Yellow Typhoon. Never would he forget this picture. The angel and the destroyer; the same blood, the same physical perfections—sisters! And beyond the blood-tie, total strangers. And for days he had been shuttlecock to their battledores; the one trying to save him, the other trying to break him.

"One question," he interrupted, grimly.

Berta whirled upon him. "Ask it!"

"Had you a hand in Bob Hallowell's death?"

"If I had I'd answer, wouldn't I! No. But I had killed him a thousand times in my heart. I hated him above all other men. Men call me The Yellow Typhoon. I ac-

cept. Woe to those who stand in my way. If I did not break Hallowell, I spoiled his life. And I have beaten you. You and your sanctimonious Hallowell! Fools, I had but to crook my finger and how beautifully you danced! I'd have twisted you around my finger with half a chance."

"Berta, do you ever stop to think?"

The Yellow Typhoon laughed. "A sermon? Save it."

"No regret, no pity?"

"Oh, I have my regrets . . . failures. But if you mean do I regret you and the past, a thousand times no. You say I have returned from the grave. You have yourself to thank for that. I had almost forgotten you. I promise you that I shall seek the mother."

"Take care, Berta! I am my father's daughter, too!"

"A threat?"

Mathison began to grow alarmed. Never had he felt the danger so near. If Hilda suspected the game he was playing and dropped a single hint, they were lost; he, at any rate. The Secret Service would not strike until he was out of this house. Such had been his order. But if this madwoman caught one glimmer of the truth!

"Come, Miss Farrington," he said.

"Very well. But always remember I tried to save you, Berta."

"Farrington, Farrington! And I had all but forgotten! One of the men here told me. Farrington, the Broadway celebrity, rich and famous! Oh, if I but had the time!"

"To injure me? You will not find it, Berta."

"No? Wait and see. To-morrow I shall search for the mother."

"You shall never find her. I wish you no evil. After all, you are still the child that was always touching the stove. Take care of yourself; and good-by forever, sister."

In reply The Yellow Typhoon sped across to the hall door, which opened with such violence that the knob was shattered.

"Go! I am ordered to free you. But for that! . . . Go! Meddle no more with my affairs, Hilda Nordstrom!"

Hilda passed into the hall. Mathison ran ahead and unslipped the door-chain; and a moment later they stood on the sidewalk, shadowy to each other in the blinding snow.

CHAPTER XVI

STRAIGHTWAY Mathison put his arm under hers and began plowing along through the snow, which was more than ankle-deep. As his stride was long, she slipped and staggered to keep pace with him. There was a comforting strength in that arm of his.

The tension over, the encounter past, her mind was like her feet, heavy and without spring. A thought, entering her head, wandered about emptily, then went away. Her brain was like a vast cathedral, with one or two lonely tourists exploring. This droll imagery caused her to burst out laughing. Mathison merely tightened his grip.

She was soul-weary and body-weary. She would have liked to lie down in the soft inviting snow and never move again. The drab future that lay beyond! What might have been could not possibly be now. So long as Berta lived Hilda must walk in

her shadow. It did not matter whether Berta roved free or was locked up in prison. And no doubt this man at her side, clean-cut and honorable above his kind, was already planning how to break the slender thread of their acquaintance. Why not? Seeing her, would he not always be seeing Berta, who in his eyes was a criminal of a dangerous type? From afar she heard his voice.

"There's a drug-store on the next corner. We'll order a taxi from there. Your feet will be wet. . . . I need not tell you I'm sorry."

"That my feet are wet or that the woman you know as The Yellow Typhoon is my twin sister? Why bother? I ought to hate her. Still, to me flesh and blood *is* flesh and blood. She is dangerous and should be punished; and yet instinct rebels at the thought. Free, she will be havoc. I know her of old. Her furies when she was little were frightful because they were always calculated. For days I've been dreading the encounter, dreading yet courting it. It was inevitable. Flesh and blood! What *was* God's idea? My poor mother! She has been through so much; and now this

must strike her. She was a circus-rider in the Copenhagen hippodrome, beautiful and admired. My father won and married her because it pleased his vanity. He tired of her within a month. Then he beat her. He was half Prussian. Tortured and discarded her. Is there anything in prenatal influence? They say not. Yet look at Berta! My father's soul. I don't understand!" brokenly.

"I am terribly sorry. An *impasse;* and I don't know which way to turn. She is a dangerous enemy, and this is war. For your sake I want to let her go, back to the East. For my country's sake I cannot. She must pay the grim reckoning. I have some influence. There will be no publicity. I can readily promise you that. You're a brick; and I'd cut my hand off to save you this hurt. But I repeat, this is war. Fortunately the affair is military, out of the reach of civil court, beyond the reporters. Winnowed of all chaff, the grain is that I'm powerless. In certain directions I have tremendous power, but only as an agent. I cannot judge, condemn, or liberate. I am desperately sorry. She is the wife or companion of the man I believe

killed my friend. She is the woman who gratuitously spoiled my friend's life. The counts against her are heavy."

"I understand. You cannot break your oath of allegiance for me; and my oath of allegiance will not permit you. But it tears and rends. Still, she once passed out of my life absolutely. Perhaps my concern is for my mother. I am numb with the tragedy of it. Flesh and blood, but she denied it. I tried to save her. Suppose we let Berta's fate rest on the knees of the gods?"

"If it is proven she had nothing to do with Hallowell's death, there is a chance of merely interning her for the duration of the war."

"Hallowell! That afternoon he spoke to me in the Botanical Gardens. He thought I was Berta. I tried to save him, but I reached the villa too late. I *saw* it, in silhouette on the curtains! I called, rang the bell, shook the gate. Then the lights went out. . . . I tried to save him!"

"I know. He was the finest friend a man ever had. And somewhere up there among the stars his spirit is at peace. John Mathison has come through!"

"Alone, all alone, without aid from any one. With an immeasurable power behind you, you fought it out alone. It was splendid—American! That envelope! The tameness of your surrender hurt. I did not understand until after we were in that house and I saw you smile. That receipt was only a trap, a bait; and the man you believe killed Hallowell walked blindly into it. No one but you could touch that envelope, once it was in a hotel safe. Am I right?"

"The man is a prisoner in my room at this moment. When we enter this drugstore, it is a signal for the raiding of that house, fore and aft. A fly couldn't escape. We idiotic Yankees! I have him. It took patience. But there was a guardian angel watching over John Mathison. Had you not warned me they would have learned the dance I was leading them, and vanished. They had me for sleep. I thought I was awake, but actually I was sleep-walking."

"Then I wasn't useless, after all?"

"No." He smiled at the sky, at the stars he couldn't see but knew were there. Day after to-morrow!

Mathison was a one-idea man. What I mean is, when he undertook a task he went

at it directly, whole-heartedly; there were never any side issues.

Presently he spoke again. "There is one favor I must ask of you, to tighten the noose around this man's neck. Will you testify before the authorities that you found the blue-print in his kit-bag? Otherwise I cannot prove that it was in his possession. The theft of the receipt constitutes a military crime; but the blue-print convicts him of murder, either as principal or accessory. I can promise you there will be no publicity. Will you help me?"

"I have sworn to."

"Do you know that blond man's name?"

"No."

"Neither do I. Curious thing. In that little red book there are three descriptions; these vary only in the occupations of the men described. All three are bulky, blond, and ruddy. Until now I dared not be inquisitive."

"And will you do me a favor?"

"Ask it."

"Let me see it through."

"You mean, go back with me to the hotel?"

"Yes."

"Very well. And you can take Malachi home with you."

They entered the drug-store, stamping the snow from their feet.

To be with him just a little while longer. . . . Because she loved him, she, Hilda Nordstrom, the proud! Not because she wanted to, but because it was written. The one man in the world, and he did not care. Friendly and interested, mystified until now; and to-morrow he would go his way. The daughter of a circus-rider, the sister of The Yellow Typhoon. The Farrington was no more; to him she would always be Hilda Nordstrom. Her fame would not touch him, for he was without vanity. What had her heart been calling out through it all, since the miracle of the violets? "Love me! Love me!" She had thrown it forth as a hypnotist throws the will. "Love me! Love me!" And all the while he was busy with this affair of the manila envelope, the blue-print and vengeance. All he had sought her for was to prove that there were two women, so that he might minimize the confusion, make no future misstep. Was there another woman? Had he not hinted at the supper-table that there was? And

yet, on board the *Nippon Maru*, hadn't he told her there was no one? She just could not make him out. There, on the Pacific, his every act had been boyish, tender, whimsical. Here, he was smiling, bronze, inscrutable, primordial. Blood and iron. The one man; and he was only friendly, he didn't care. When she paused to analyze the situation, however, the question arose: Why should he care? As Hilda Nordstrom—The Farrington—he had known her less than three hours. It was so hard to remember that on board the ship he had been John Mathison to her, but she had been to him a baffling, begoggled old lady, hugging shadowy corners and keeping her back to the moon.

What had happened to the world? Only a little while gone—a few months—she had been happy, gay with the gay, enjoying life, success, the rewards of long and weary endeavor. And up over the fair horizon had risen The Typhoon. Berta, always Berta!

"Pardon! I did not hear," she said.

"I said I was going to do a bit of telephoning. I'll round up a taxi. The boy is making you a cup of hot chocolate. Better drink it."

"Oh."

Mathison was gone for a quarter of an hour. He came back to her smiling. The taxi was at the curb.

"Better let me take you straight home," he suggested.

"You promised."

"But to-morrow . . ."

"To-morrow," she smiled, "always takes care of itself."

"Come. After all, it will be a matter of only a few moments. All I've got to do is to run up to the room and give the Secret Service men their orders. And I'll bring down Malachi. You are sure you want him?"

"Of course I am!" His little green parrakeet!

Later, when they entered Peacock Alley —totally deserted at this hour—he flung his greatcoat into a chair, pinning the green ribbon to the breast of his jacket.

"Suppose you sit here on this divan? I sha'n't be gone more than ten minutes. I ordered the taxi to wait."

"Go along, sailorman. And don't forget Malachi."

He wondered if she realized how easily

that name fell from her lips. . . . Well, day after to-morrow! He marched briskly up to the desk.

"Take a good look at me," he said to the clerk; "then go to the safe and get the manila envelope with my photographs on it."

"Yes, sir. I was waiting for you," replied the clerk, with subdued excitement. "The man who presented the receipt is in charge in your rooms." He returned shortly with the envelope.

Mathison crumpled it into a pocket. "Of course you understand that all these mysterious actions have to do with the government and that there must be absolute secrecy on the part of the management."

"I have my orders to that effect, sir."

Mathison nodded and turned toward the nearest elevator shaft.

In a room on the ninth floor were three men. One sat near the window. His arms were folded, and in his lap was a Colt. The fire-escape was outside this window. In a manner peculiar to Americans, he rocked on the rear legs of his chair; and every little while there was a slight thud

as the chair-back hit the wall or the fore-legs hit the floor. The second man sat with his back toward the bathroom. From this point of vantage he could watch both the entrance to the room and the man on the bed. He evinced signs of boredom, as did the face of his companion. He was toying with an automatic. He was sunk in his chair, his legs resting on the heels of his shoes.

The prisoner, his hands clasped behind his head, seemed particularly interested in a pattern on the ceiling; but in reality he was counting the thuds of the Secret Service operative's chair; and out of this sound developed a daring campaign for liberty. Because he had surrendered docilely, without a sign of protest or struggle, he was confident he had by this time broken a wedge into the vigilance of his captors. He was a big man, blond, but his cheeks were no longer ruddy.

On a stand by the radiator Malachi occasionally shifted his weight from one foot to the other. He didn't love anybody, and he never was going to love anybody again. His nose—or rather his beak—was thoroughly out of joint with the world. Rooms

that swung high and swung low; rooms that rattled and banged, the red walls of which hurt his eyes; and rooms with glaring lights. And always, just as he believed his troubles over, up went the cotton bag and he was off to other surprises. No; he was never going to love anybody again.

The man near the bathroom inspected his watch. "He ought to be along now."

The man on the bed sat up. Slowly he swung his legs to the floor. He rubbed his palms together, and the links between the manacles clinked slightly. He stood up.

"May I go to the bathroom?"

The man in the chair near the bathroom nodded. There was no exit from the bathroom.

"Leave the door open," he advised.

Alone, he would have risen and faced the bathroom door. But across the room was his companion, who, from where he sat, could see into the bathroom obliquely. Slowly the prisoner passed the chair. He was the picture of dejection. With unbelievable swiftness in a man so big he turned and threw his arms over the Secret Service man's head, bringing the manacle chain against his throat, murderously, all but

garroting him. The automatic had scarcely touched the floor before the blond man, releasing his victim and stooping behind the chair, recovered it.

Now comes the point upon which his endeavor had been based. When you lean back in a chair, to recover necessitates a sharp forward tilt. Sometimes you get all the way down and sometimes you have to make a second effort. So it happened to the operative by the window, dumfounded by the daring and suddenness of the attack. As he threw himself forward the second time violently the automatic slipped. He caught it, but not quick enough.

"Drop it! For I shall shoot to kill. Get up. Now kick it in my direction. Very good." These words were uttered with dispassionate coolness.

The victim of the garroting was writhing and coughing on the floor. He would be out of it for several minutes. There was only one idea in his head—to get air through his tortured throat.

To the other operative the blond man said: "I am a desperate man and I promise to kill you if you do not obey me absolutely.

Unless I go forth free I might as well go forth dead. It is my life against yours. Walk toward me with your hands up."

The Secret Service operative had heard voices like this before, and he wanted to live. Moreover, he knew that every exit would be covered until the patrol arrived, if it were not already at the curb. At the utmost the blond devil's victory would be short-lived.

"You win," he said, quietly, stepping forward.

"Face the other way."

The operative obeyed. The manacled hands rose above the unprotected head and the gun-butt came crashing down. The operative slumped to the floor. The blond man's subsequent actions bespoke his thoroughness in handling this kind of an affair. He sought the handkerchiefs, wet them, and tied the operatives' hands behind their backs. Few fabrics are tougher than wet linen. The man he had hit was either dead or insensible; so he paid no more attention to this unfortunate. His interest was in the operative who was now slowly getting air into his lungs. The blond man threw him on his face, sat on him, then rifled the pock-

ets for the manacle key. He found it and freed his wrists. He ran to the bathroom again and returned with a wet towel which he wound about the half-strangled man's head. Next he calmly pocketed his belongings which lay on the bureau-top.

He was reasonably certain that he could not escape by any of the hotel entrances. There was only one chance. A window on the first floor, from which he would have to risk a drop of twelve or fourteen feet to the sidewalk.

Malachi was climbing up to his swing and clambering down to his perch.

The blond man, the automatic ready, opened the door . . . and Mathison stepped in! The advantage of surprise was in this instance on Mathison's side. A fighting-man of the first order, he struck first. He brought his fist down hammer-wise upon the pistol, at the same time sending the toe of his boot to the enemy's knee-cap. Instinctive actions, but both blows went home. The blond man was forced to give back in order to set himself.

There began, then, in that small room, one of those contests which the Blind Poet loved to recount and which we nowadays

call Homeric. Mathison was lighter than his opponent by thirty pounds, but he gave battle with a singing heart. This was as it should be, man to man. No tedious affair of the courts; cold, formal justice. Hot blood and bare hands! . . . An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!

The blond man, as he looked into Mathison's eyes, sensed that he was about to fight for his life; thus he became endowed with a frenzy which doubled his strength. His one blind endeavor was to get his gorilla arms around this Yankee swine who had tricked and beaten him. He lunged, head down. Mathison jabbed him, and with lightning speed shut the door with a backward kick.

He met the blond man at every point; boxed him, used his boots, employed the science of the Jap wrestler, threw obstacles, laughed, taunted sailor fashion; in fact, fought with the primordial savagery of the Stone Age, scorning the niceties of sportsmanship. He knew what his antagonist was—a Prussian, or one who had been Prussianized. And with devilish cunning and foresight he carried the Prussian idea to this blond giant. . . . To kill him with his bare hands!

The blond man's desperate swings landed frequently; for with his eye upon a single point, Mathison was often compelled to expose his face. That throat! To reach it with that Japanese side-cut, a blow that saps and blinds.

Once the enemy succeeded in gripping Mathison's jacket where its fastenings met: and Mathison, wrenching back, left half the front of his smart jacket in the eager hand.

Bloody, an eye half closed, his lips puffed and bleeding—but his teeth showing soundly through the grotesque smile—a gash across his forehead, Mathison continued to play for the throat. Queer thing about such contests: there isn't any pain until it is over.

A dozen times they stumbled over the operatives on the floor. The one with the towel around his head was now alive and tugging powerfully at the wet linen binding his wrists. Finally he managed to get to his feet, only to be hurled against the wall.

The inconvenience of these obstacles, animate and inanimate, reacted against Mathison as often as it did against his

enemy; and one time Mathison was borne back against the foot-rail of the bed. But a violent thrust of his knee extricated him.

Suddenly and unexpectedly Mathison was offered his opening. The operative, who was still blinded by the wet towel, rose again and staggered about. He struck against the blond man's shoulder, and as the latter thrust him aside Mathison struck. Not an honorable blow, this cut at the throat; not the sort white men use in fisticuffs. But I repeat, these two were bent on killing each other.

When you touch a hot coal your hand jerks back. It is reflex action purely; the conscious brain has nothing to do with it. So it is with the blow on the Adam's apple. The hands fly to the throat because they *must.*

Mathison did not pause to note the effect of the stroke. He knew that it had gone home. He had been badly punished, but he was still fighting strong. The years of clean living, of unsapped vitality, were paying dividends to-night. He sent in a smothering hail of blows, with all the power he had left to put behind them.

It was now that the other man began to realize that he was no longer interested in killing Mathison, that he sought only to get away from this force and fury which were superior to his own. He looked about desperately for a corner to turn; but there wasn't any. Back he went, back until his legs struck the edge of the bed. Even as he wavered Mathison leaped, bore his man down, knelt on his ribs and dug his fingers into the bull-like neck. No doubt Mathison would have throttled him. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But a singular event stayed his hands.

During all this surging to and fro, this battering and scuffling, Malachi's fear and agitation had grown to the point where he was compelled to express his disapproval in the only way he knew—by sounds, hoarse, raucous sounds, human words.

"Mat! . . . *Chota Malachi*! . . . You lubber, where's my tobacco? . . . Mat! . . . Lysgaard! . . . To hell with the Ki! . . . Mathison, Hallowell and Company, and be damned to you! . . . Mat! . . . Lysgaard!"

Slowly Mathison drew back. The berserker lust to kill evaporated, leaving him cold and sick. The revelation that the name of

the murderer was Lysgaard was insignificant beside the fact that Hallowell had reached out from Beyond and saved his friend from carrying blood-guilty hands to Hilda Nordstrom, who waited down-stairs!

CHAPTER XVII

MEANTIME the jar of the battle had not passed unnoticed. The guests in the rooms adjoining and below had been telephoning the office. The clerk, aware that there were Secret Service operatives at all exits, hastily summoned them. And four plunged into Mathison's room just as he stepped away from the bed.

"It's all over, gentlemen," he said, thickly. "The man on the bed is wanted on two accounts—theft of naval plans and murder. He is Karl Lysgaard. In 1916, to cover his espionage endeavors, he became a naturalized citizen. Ostensibly he is Danish; but he was born in Holtenau, near enough to the Kiel Canal to make him a first-class Prussian. Take him to the Tombs, and keep your eye on him while taking him there. I will appear against him in the morning. The woman known as The Yellow Typhoon . . ."

"Has vanished," whispered one of the operatives.

"Escaped?"

"Like smoke! Telephone message came while you were up here. But she won't go far. Already all exits are being watched. No trains, no ships; and she will not be able to hide long in New York. Some scrap you must have had here. Your uniform's a wreck. Better wash up."

Mathison staggered into the bathroom, now mindful of his injuries. He was sure that one or more of his ribs were broken. Every beat of his heart was accompanied by a stab either in his head or in his torso. The floor wavered like sand in the heat; and he was none too certain about the walls.

Escaped! The Yellow Typhoon had slipped through that web! He did not know whether he was glad or sorry. Not one man in a thousand would have broken through that alert cordon; and yet this woman had done it. The pity of it! Brave and fearless and beautiful . . . and absolutely lawless. He could not stir up a bit of hatred. She had broken Bob Hallowell's heart, and yet John Mathison could only admire her

strength and cunning. The admiration a brave man always pays a fearless antagonist. Somehow he knew that she would be free for a long while. But how would she use this furtive freedom? Seek to injure Hilda, himself? Like as not. But he had in mind a solution for this problem. It would depend, though, upon the woman waiting down-stairs.

Entering the room again, he confronted the man he had outthought and outfought. He was dizzy, but he could navigate alone. The blond man had to be propped between two operatives. He was in a bad way. Mathison produced the manila envelope.

"Observe those photographs? That is why you did not succeed. We idiotic Yankees! They will hang you by the neck, Lysgaard. What! You believed I would risk carrying Hallowell's specifications in an ordinary manila envelope, depositing it when I stopped at a hotel, letting everybody know that I was carrying an important document? Your method, perhaps, but not mine. And the irony of it is the prints were always within easy reach of your hand. This manila envelope was merely a noose, and you drew it yourself. It is a forerun-

ner of what your nation will receive at the hands of mine."

Mathison ripped open the envelope and displayed the contents—a dozen sheets of heavy blank paper.

"You will never see your woman again, Lysgaard. I had no evidence. I compelled you to furnish it. A man-hunt and you never suspected. Take him away, gentlemen; and thanks for your assistance."

Down-stairs Hilda waited, with growing wonder and anxiety. When she finally saw Lysgaard lurch out of the elevator, supported, her anxiety became terror. What had happened? Where was Mathison? She wanted to rush forward and ask questions, but she dared not. The value of her services would always depend upon the fact that her activities were practically unknown. So she sat perfectly quiet and watched the remarkable procession file past and vanish round the corner of the corridor.

The sight of the blond beast naturally brought back the thought of Berta. She, too, was now a prisoner. Prison. A cell with bars and filtered sunshine, interminable monotony and maddening thoughts.

It was horrible. And she, Hilda, could do nothing. Berta merited whatever punishment an outraged nation might see fit to visit upon her. Flesh and blood—or was there something in the psychology of double-birth? Was there really an invisible connecting link? Yet, if so, why had she not *felt* that Berta was alive? Why had she shed tears over the poor, unrecognizable thing in Berta's clothes she and the mother had buried eight years ago? If only something occult had warned her! The mother might have borne up under such a blow—the return of the wayward. But to her Berta was dead; and a return under the present tragic circumstances would without doubt result in a death shock. Ah, if Berta had come back a penitent, the news might have been broken gradually. But a lawless Berta, predatory, vengeful . . .!

And to-morrow night Norma Farrington would romp across the stage, now tender, now whimsical; now making her audience laugh, now bringing them to the verge of tears. And all the while Hilda Nordstrom's heart would be breaking. She would complete the run because her word had never been broken. She could not possibly find

it in her thoughts to be disloyal to loyal Sam Rubin.

Love! It was not enough that Berta should return to life. She, Hilda, must give her heart unasked to a man who appeared to be quite satisfied with friendship. She hadn't even fought against it. Non-resistant, she had permitted this crowning folly to creep into her heart. She had forgotten that to him Mrs. Chester was an old woman, and that he had sought her society because he was just humanly lonesome. She hadn't had her chance. With the physical attributes of a Venus and the mental attainments of an Aspasia, a woman might not win the heart of a man in three short hours. Love at first sight! She trembled. He had used that subject merely to pass the time and to keep the conversation away from dangerous channels. She was very unhappy.

She heard the elevator door rattle in the groove. Mathison stepped forth. Malachi's cage bobbed against a leg. He paused a moment (truthfully, to get his sea-legs, for he was still groggy) and brushed his forehead with his free hand. The movement left a bloody smear.

She flew to him and cried, in passionate anger, "The beast has hurt you!"

"Banged me up a bit. But my teeth are all sound, and I still can bite. He got loose somehow, and . . . well, I went berserker. I'm a sight! Malachi did a fine thing to-night. I was killing that man, when Malachi spoke up. I'll see you home."

"Indeed you shall . . . straight up to my apartment, where I can take care of those cuts and bruises."

"At this hour?" tingling.

"What matters the hour? Wouldn't you prefer me to the hotel physician?" raising the veil and letting him look into her eyes, which were full of sapphire lights.

"All right. You may do with me as you please."

Day after to-morrow was now very far away. At no time in his life had he craved so poignantly for the touch of a woman's hand. To be ministered to, coddled, made of; a memory to take away with him to the high seas, from which he might never return.

She ran back for his greatcoat, held it for him and noted the grimace as he stretched his arms backward for the sleeves.

"What is it?"

"Ribs, head, and shoulder; all in the sick-bay. Lord, but I'm a wreck!"

She picked up the cage and grasped his sleeve. Her heart sang. For an hour or two; to use all her arts in making the episode unforgetable to this man. To mother and coddle him; to run her eager fingers through his fine hair. An hour or two, all, all her own!

In the taxi he told her briefly what had happened and brought the Odyssey to an end by disclosing the fact that Berta had escaped the net.

"But don't worry. I've an idea she'll be too busy to trouble you. She's keen. By now she must understand that the game is up. She will be concerned with little else besides her efforts to get clear of New York. Ten to one, she'll strike for the Orient. I'm sorry. Not that she escaped, but that she was able to hurt you. We're all riddles, aren't we?"

"Berta free? . . . I'm glad. I can't help it. It may be the turning-point. In all these years she has never met with any serious defeat. Who knows? For if she is her father's daughter, she is also her

mother's. God bring her vision to see things clearly! That blond beast's evil influence removed, who knows?"

In the cozy living-room of the apartment a fire burned low. Hilda threw on a log, then helped him off with his coat. As a matter of fact he really had to be helped. Obsessed with the idea of getting his hands on the man Lysgaard's throat, he had laid himself open to many terrible blows. He was going to be very sore and lame to-morrow.

She swung the willow lounge parallel to the fire and forced him to lie down.

"Back in a moment!" she said, flying away.

He lay back and closed his sound eye; the other was already closed. And as he lay there, awaiting her return, the Idea came. He could never win this glorious creature by simply telling her he loved her. He would have to take her by storm, carry her off her feet—and he was only a molly-coddle among the women. Still, he knew what he knew. Presently he smiled; at least it was meant for a smile. How the deuce would he be able to kiss her when the time came, with his lips puffed and bleeding? The glory of her!

Obliquely he could see Malachi. "The little son-of-a-gun! And he hasn't the least idea that he saved his master from being as beastly as the Hun. . . . Close shave! . . . Bob's voice, calling out the name of the man who had killed him, like that! . . . I'll be a trig-looking individual when I strike Washington to-morrow!" ruefully.

Hilda returned with basin, alcohol, lint, bandages, and salves. And he let her have her way with him. After she had bandaged the gash on his forehead and his raw knuckles, she wet her finger-tips with alcohol and ran them back and forth through his hair. Not since his mother's death had this happened; and never had he experienced such a thrill. He longed to seize the hand and kiss it, but he conquered the desire.

By and by he spoke. "The blue-prints, with No. 9, are in the hollow under Malachi's basin. They are in a rubber sack such as you roll up slickers in. I'll take them out when I go. Be sure you talk a little to him every day. He likes it. He's a gossip. Rice and fruits and nuts; he's frugal. It will buck me up to know that he is in good hands."

"The funny little green bird! I'll take care of him until you come back."

"That's odd. Somehow I *know* I'm coming back. . . . Where's this man Rubin live?"

"Rubin? He has an apartment near by." Rubin? What had Rubin to do with this hour, resentfully!

"What's a successful week amount to?"

"We'll probably draw from ten to twelve thousand." What in the world was the meaning of such irrelevant questions?

"About thirty thousand in two weeks," ruminatingly. "I am, even in these days, a comparatively rich man. Lots of ready money, bonds, and stock. It's been piling up for years. And now I'm glad it has."

She understood. He had been struck a dangerous blow on the head, and his mind was wandering. She patted his hand reassuringly.

He went on. "The old home—which I haven't seen in nearly ten years—is up-state, on the edge of the North Woods. The man who farms it keeps up the house. A day's work would make it habitable. Just now it must be wonderful. Skating and snowshoeing. Lord! how I've hungered for the snow! . . . I wonder if that extension 'phone will reach over here?"

"Yes." Poor boy! Did he expect to get his farmer on long-distance at this hour?

"Splendid! Now suppose you bring it over?"

She did so. She knelt beside the lounge and held out the telephone.

"No. You're going to start it. Call up Rubin. He'll be asleep; but what I've got to say will wake him up."

"What in the world . . ."

"Call him up! I'm an invalid and must be humored."

For a moment her fingers seemed all thumbs. She succeeded in calling the number. There came a long wait. She stole a glance at Mathison. He might have been asleep, for all the interest he evinced in this extraordinary proceeding. What *could* he want of Rubin?

"Hello! It is you, Sam? This is Hilda. . . . No, no! nobody's dead. . . . There's a gentleman here. . . . Oh, it's perfectly proper. . . . He wants to speak to you. . . . I don't know. . . . He is not a dub. . . . Yes; the flowers and the note . . . you *knew* it! What do you mean? . . . All right."

She turned to Mathison. "I have him."

Mathison managed to lift himself to a

more comfortable angle. "This Mr. Rubin? Ah! . . . I'll break it gently. Hilda and I are going to be married in the morning. . . . Keep your hair on! . . . Then we are going to Washington. On our return we are going to spend the honeymoon at my home in the North Woods. . . . Contract? What the deuce is that to me? . . . No; you can't talk to her until I'm through. . . . Contract! . . . Listen to me. You will announce that she is ill. She will be if she goes on to-morrow night, after all she's been through. . . . Hang it! She and I have a right to two weeks of happiness. To you it's business; to me it's love. I will give you fifty thousand dollars in cold, hard cash for these two weeks, which is about twenty thousand more than you would ordinarily make. I'll give my permission to make a feature story out of it. And if I know anything about human nature, on her return you'll pack the house all summer. If you refuse my offer, not a bally copper cent! I'll break her contract for her and you may sue from Maine to Oregon. . . . What's that? . . . Well, by George, that's handsome! I thought you were a good sport. Buy out the house for exactly what it would be worth. Come

around in the morning and be best man! Oh, about nine-thirty. Good night!"

Mathison turned to the stupefied Hilda. There was a short tableau; then she laid her head on the arm of the lounge and cried softly.

"Girl, I can do only one thing well at a time. I couldn't tell you verbally I loved you until I'd cleared the deck. . . . Sounds! Remember? When you came in through that window it was your voice, but I couldn't place it then. I opened that red book and one of Malachi's feathers dropped out. That recalled the old lady who called me Boy. I wanted to write something, and couldn't find my pen. It was in my cits. And then I found that photograph of you. That's how I learned there were two of you. When you talked on the stage to-night I shut my eyes. Then I knew. That's how I came to laugh out loud. Sheer joy! Fourteen years! You've *got* to love me. You've *got* to marry me. God is just. He won't deny me now. Didn't you tell me I'd find Her? . . . Sounds! That's what I meant—your voice. I didn't know why I came to you every morning on board the *Nippon Maru*, but my heart did. My eyes

saw only a queer, whimsical old lady; but my heart saw youth and beauty and love. Will you marry me?"

A nod.

"You are going to try to love me?"

"No!"

"What?"

"You . . . you can't go to do something when you already do!"

"Wabbly rhetoric, but I understand! . . . Hilda, I love you with all my soul! Love you, love you! I've been saying in my heart all night: 'Love me! Love me!' ".

"So have I! . . . But I'll never forgive you!"

"For what?"

"You told Rubin before you told *me!*"

"Lord! Lord! I've been telling you all night with my eyes that I loved you." He brushed her shining hair with burning lips. He couldn't even put his arms around her! "Now there's just one thing I've got to hear to make this the most perfect hour in my life." He raised her head. There was a violent stab in his side, but he considered it negligible in this supreme moment. "Say it!"

"Boy!" she whispered.

The way she had always dreamed of being loved. Berserker love! To be swept off her feet and carried away to an enchanted palace! That little magic green feather! Malachi! She pressed her cheek against this wonderful lover's and her hand instinctively found his.

"Mat, you lubber!" grumbled Malachi, from the rosy hearth.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE Mathison estate was in the foothills of the Adirondacks. There were farmlands, pulp-mills, forests, and streams. At the northern extremity of the estate there was a small lake. The manor proper stood on the south shore of this lake, four miles from the village and the railway station. It was a lonely habitation in the winter.

The house was of limestone, beautifully weathered, and was dated 1812. Here Mathison had been born; here he had spent his early youth. With the father almost constantly at sea, the mother had preferred the quiet of the woods to the noise and bluster of New York.

Hilda went into ecstasies over chairs and sofas that had become antique in these very rooms. She saw the mother's hand everywhere, the quiet artistry of a hand guided by a noble mind. Hilda romped about the

rooms with the eager curiosity of a child; and it might be truthfully added that Mathison romped with her. They were so completely in love that they saw beauty in everything, in the hard, brilliant sunsets, in the Northern Lights, in the yellow dawns. Every day they skated or snow-shoed; and there was always a roaring chestnut fire to greet them.

And yet there were shadows, deep and somber shadows, that fell across the sunshine of their happiness. They never said anything about these shadows to each other; but always during the hour that comes before candles the shadows pressed in and down. Hilda could not shut out the thought of Berta. Where was she, what was she doing? Berta might deny the blood, but Hilda could not. Berta was her twin. During this twilight hour she saw this beautiful counterpart of herself moving furtively, flying by night, hiding by day, alone, alone; perhaps penniless and hungry. When the thought of the wayward one became too strong Hilda sought the piano, which she played exquisitely.

Mathison's shadow lay upon him perpetually, but more keenly when he and

Hilda sat before the fire, waiting for the lights. The man Lysgaard had escaped. Free! Beaten and to all appearances broken, he had escaped on the way to the Tombs. A forced pause before a fire in a chemical establishment had opened the way for him. The crowd, the noise and confusion, and the insatiable curiosity and over-confidence of his captors had given him his chance. The strength of the rogue, after that beating! They had left one man in the patrol with him, and Lysgaard had suddenly dashed his manacled hands into the man's face and then choked him into insensibility. He had coolly taken the operative's hat and overcoat. The latter he had wrapped across his shoulders, holding it together from the inside. He had then stepped into the seething crowd and vanished completely. Search for him had been in vain. He had probably known where to find a haven. The real menace in his being at large lay in the fact that undoubtedly he did not know that Berta was a twin. He would have means of finding what had become of John Mathison. He would learn that a woman had accompanied his enemy. A trifling description of that woman would be enough.

Being a Prussian, there would be only one idea in Lysgaard's head—Berta had run away with the man who had beaten him. Vengeance, before they found him and dropped the noose over his head.

There was a third shadow and they shared this mutually if silently—Mathison's inevitable departure for English waters.

"John," she said, one afternoon, "I'm so happy that it hurts."

He laughed and swung her into his arms, which never ceased to be hungry for her; and there was always a sharp little stab when he let her go. The hour was fast approaching when he would have to let her go, perhaps forever. . . .

"Glorious up here, isn't it?"

"But why do you bar the windows and doors so carefully at night? There can't be any burglars in this wilderness, at least not in the winter."

"You never can tell. Sometimes there are mighty high winds around these diggings. You heard how the windows rattled last night." Mathison reached for his cup of tea. So she had noticed?

"How your mother must have loved this place!"

"What makes you think that?"

"Why, it fairly breathes of love; the beauty of all the furnishings and the way they are arranged. What fun it must have been—and you toddling around after her! Come; I want to show you something." She led over to a corner, and there in a heap were rows of battered leaden soldiers, twisted leaden swords, and forts of wood. "War, battle," went on Hilda, soberly; "even as little children. What has happened to the souls of men, that from generation to generation the male child's toys must be these? Must women always suffer to see these things about? I found them in the garret."

'Instinct, little old lady. From the day one man has had to protect himself and his woman, bloodily. We are still doing it, on a more terrible scale than ever. Odd, I haven't laid eyes on these in twenty years."

"How often your mother must have watched you there on the floor before the fire, playing at war, and your father facing death at sea. But oh, lover, lover!" She caught him fiercely to her. "In so short a time! I haven't said anything, for I did

not want to mar your happiness. But it is hurting so! Dear God. bring him back to me!"

"Honey, I'll come back. There isn't a shell or a U-boat in the world with my name on it. I know it. I hate to have you return to the stage, and yet it will be the best thing. You'll be busy. Idleness never bucks up a person's courage."

"Hark!" She stepped back from him swiftly. "I hear sleigh-bells." She stiffened. Sleigh-bells and yellow envelopes, for she knew that Mathison had left orders at the station to send out telegrams immediately they were received. There was no telephone.

"The village grocer, maybe," suggested Mathison, himself receiving a shock at the sound of the bells.

"No; he always drives out before noon."

Hilda ran to the window to peer out, but it was too dark for her to see anything distinctly.

As for Mathison, he shifted his automatic to the right side-pocket of his jacket. Merely precautionary; for the man he was expecting would not approach the front door with such boldness. Yet the man was

infernally clever in some ways. He was likely to do the unexpected. Of course, there was always a chance that Lysgaard might try to put to sea and put over his hour of vengeance until later. There was an odd trait in Mathison's character. He was always suspicious when events ran along too smoothly. His very happiness was almost a warning. He had often thought of having a Secret Service man come up and watch the four trains that passed daily; but, being a man of red blood, he hated the idea. If Lysgaard succeeded in getting through the cordon, he would try to find John Mathison. Backed as he was by a powerful secret organization, and no doubt having John Mathison's *dossier* in his pocket or in his memory, he would not have much difficulty in locating the dove-cote.

"Why, it's a woman!" cried Hilda.

"A woman? All right. You stay here and I'll go to the door."

He reached the door just as the bell rang. The visitor entered without a word and raised a thick veil.

"Well, brother-in-law!" mockingly.

"Berta?" came a startled voice from the doorway leading to the living-room.

"Yes, dear sister, Berta—the ghost who wants to return to her tomb and can't find the way. I smell tea. I'd like a cup."

Berta passed into the living-room and stopped before the burning logs, stretching out her hands. The sable coat, once so magnificent, was matted and torn, the hat bedraggled, the shoes water-soaked and cracked; but the fire in Berta's eyes and the beauty of her face were still undimmed. What a woman! thought Mathison, thrilled in spite of his vague terror.

Hilda, however, saw only the hunted woman, the desperation, the cold, the hunger. A sign, and she would have opened her arms. But Berta was still The Yellow Typhoon, harassed but unconquered. She tossed her hat and coat upon a chair and helped herself to a cup of tea. There was evil mischief in her smile. After she had drunk the tea, she selected a cigarette and lighted it.

"Ah, that is good! I haven't had a decent cigarette in four days. The driver thought I was you, Hilda. What a God-forsaken hole! But it was not so hard to find. In your *dossier*—I read it while we were entering New York—it was recorded

that you were born here, that it was the only home you had. Where would two sentimental fools like you two come for their honeymoon? The North is in the blood of both of you. A ghost, Hilda; and with a wave of your hand—my evanishment. I want a passport to Denmark. It will not be wise to refuse me. I haven't tried to see the mother. We are dead to each other; let it be so. But there are other ways by which I can twist your heart, my beautiful Norma."

"Don't mind about me, John. You cannot hurt me, Berta."

"I can try. Arrest me and see what will come of it. You two have sent to his death the only man I ever cared for."

"He was a murderer!" cried Hilda.

"No; it was war. What he did was in the interest of Germany, and that absolves him."

"You are not a Prussian; you are a Dane."

"My sympathies are with Prussia; and that is enough for me. I am the daughter of a noble. I did not come here to discuss the war. I came to demand help."

Mathison sighed with relief. The woman did not know that her man was at large. He played a card in the dark.

"I purpose to give you up to the authorities at once,"he said, coldly.

Berta laughed. "Try it. Do you think me such a fool as to come unarmed?"

"And how might you be armed?"

"Ask my sister."

"She is right, John. This would kill my mother. But if we secure a passport, what is your bond?"

"The word of Berta Nordstrom. I never broke that when once I gave it. Back there in New York you spoke of the tomb. All I want is to return to it. Let me get to Denmark, and I shall never bother either of you again."

Mathison began pacing, his hands behind his back, his chin down. Berta eyed him with cynical amusement, letting the cigarette smoke drift up her nostrils. By and by she tossed the cigarette into the fire.

"If I make threats, it is because I have to. I am tired. Wait!" She made a passionate gesture. "This is no sign of weakness. I shall hate you both as long as I live. You have forced me to walk alone. I don't want to go on fighting any more. I want peace and quiet. I shall find it where I was born. Get me a pass-

port and I shall vanish. I have plenty of money. Much of it is in the banks in Copenhagen. I had always planned to return there some day. I can establish proofs of my identity and my right to the inheritance our mother denied us. Until the passport arrives I must abide here, however distasteful it may be to you. Do you believe it will be pleasant for me? Your food will be wormwood, your water lees, and your bed will burn me. Odd that I should wish to go on, that I should care to live. I sha'n't disturb your cooing. Your maid, who doubtless knows by this time that there are two of us, can bring me food. I was a fool not to have told him that there were two of us; and he may go to his death believing that I betrayed him. But I have written a letter to Manila explaining. Hate you? With every drop of blood in me! But get me the passport, and I promise to leave you both in peace."

"Very well," said Mathison, facing her; "you shall have it. But for Hilda, I should not stir a hand. You are an alien enemy. You are dangerous and merciless. You have no mercy for your sister, who tried to save you; and the word 'mother' means

nothing to you. You ruined—or tried to—the dearest friend I had. And the man of your choice murdered him in cold blood. There is a black score against you. But because I love your sister beyond ordinary man's love, I am going to let you go."

"Because you are afraid of me," tranquilly.

"Frankly because I am afraid of you."

"I hate you. If I had the time and opportunity I would do you all the evil I could. You defeated me. But for all that, you are a man; and I know men. Hilda, will you know how to keep him?"

"Yes!"

"After all, you are not my sister for nothing. Show me to my room. Have your maid bring me up something to eat. I am starved. It was such a place to find. Cooing doves, in a bleak cage like this!"

The chamber assigned to her was directly over the living-room. After dinner that night they heard her walking, walking, walking. The Snow-leopard, thought Mathison; and because she was the twin of the noble woman whose hand was locked in his he would have to cheat his government, commit his first dishonorable deed! For he

would have to lie and cheat to secure a passport for Berta Nordstrom.

"John!"

"No. I shouldn't go to her, honey. Honestly, I can't help it, but I do not trust her. I'm afraid of her. The blood no longer links you. Forget that part of it. She's forgotten it."

"Will there be trouble in getting her a passport?"

"The trouble is nothing. I've got to lie and cheat."

"We were so happy! My sister, my own flesh and blood! I just can't understand it!"

"No more can I. But the fact remains that she is still The Yellow Typhoon. And God send she leaves no wreckage here when she passes. But what a woman!"

"That is it. If we could only save her, make her see!"

Mathison stared at the ceiling and shook his head. The light thud of shoes continued. He walked over to the stand at the side of the fireplace and eyed Malachi, who was dozing.

"What a jogging I've given the poor little beggar! Malachi?"

The little green bird opened one eye belligerently, and the feathers at the back of his neck ruffled.

"John, why should she tramp like that?"

"Go to her, honey, if you wish."

But Hilda's knock on the door was not answered.

Berta remained in her room all the following day. The maid reported to her mistress that the unwelcome guest spoke no words, not even a "thank you." She no longer walked the floor, however.

About eight o'clock that night she came unexpectedly into the living-room. Mathison was putting on a fresh log. Hilda was in the music-room, playing Rachmaninoff's surging "Prelude."

"I was cold," said Berta, unemotionally.

Mathison drew up a chair for her, rather clumsily. She sent him a wry little smile as she sat down, spreading her fingers. After a while she raised her head attentively. She was listening to the music. She held this attitude for several minutes, then propped her elbows on her knees and rested her chin in her palms. Hilda played on, Chopin, Grieg, Rubinstein. Stonily Berta stared into the fire.

"She plays well . . . in the dark, too."

"She does all things well," said the lover. "You are fond of something, then?"

"Music? Yes. I am fond of many things; but I except human beings. You are trying to solve the riddle? Don't waste your time. I'm a riddle to myself. But for Hilda I should have beaten you. Do you know, if Hallowell had been weak I should have gone out to your villa. I wonder what would have happened?"

"He would have been alive this day," answered Mathison, grimly; "for we both of us would have vacated the premises. Typhoon. They named you well. And yet!"

"Ah, and yet?" Berta looked up.

"Why not become a friend instead of an enemy? You say you want peace and quiet after all this stormy life. Why not melt a little? I know my wife. She would take you in her arms with half a chance."

"Thanks. Oh, I am not ironic. I mean it. But it is impossible. I cannot change my nature. There is too much behind me. I chose the road I came by. Regret? Remorse? No. To you I am bad; to myself, I am only free. . . . Tell her to play that Russian thing again. . . . No; I must go my

chosen way. I am like your parrakeet. Sometimes I can be forced to do things, but always I am untamable. Get me that passport and I will vanish. I have never known what it is to be sorry. The faculty isn't in me. I am an outcast. I prefer it. But I am not a hypocrite. I did not come here to whine; I came to demand. But I'll soften that. Get me out of this country, which I despise, and I'll thank you. I was not implicated in the killing of your friend. Besides, it was war."

Mathison shook his head. A pagan; that was it. He stooped to stir a log and got a glimpse of her eyes. They were dry and hard. A passport, or was she up to some deadly mischief? However quickly he might obtain a passport, he knew it would not arrive until after he himself had put to sea. Berta free and Hilda alone? He leaned against the mantel, wondering what the end would be.

There were French doors on the south side of the living-room. To the north were the original deep-set windows with broad seats and heavy shutters. Mathison locked up only when about to retire for the night. His back was toward the south, so he missed

the forewarning of the menace. The brass knob of one of the doors was turning with infinite slowness, a small fraction of an inch at a time. If there was any sound, it was smothered by the magnificent chords of Rachmaninoff's melancholy inspiration.

Suddenly Berta stood up, covered a yawn, and started toward the staircase. She had reached the middle of the room, when a rush of cold air caused Mathison to turn. He saw Lysgaard, his blue eyes burning with madness, his cheeks hollow and white with fury. There followed two shots, but Mathison's was a second too late. Berta's hands flew automatically to her breast; wide-eyed she stared at Lysgaard for a space, then an expression of deep weariness settled upon her face. She swayed, her knees doubled, and she sank in a huddle upon the rug.

Lysgaard leaned against the wall, gripping his bloody hand.

"She had to die! . . . She betrayed me!" His voice was like that of a spent runner. "*You!* She came to *you!* I meant to kill you, too! . . . *Gott!*"

For Hilda was standing in the doorway to the music-room, clutching the portières,

hanging literally to them, in fact, struck by that hypnosis with which sudden tragedy always benumbs us. She saw the crumpled figure on the floor; her husband, tense of body, his weapon ready, his face hard and merciless; the blond man, sagged against the wall, staring with pathetic bewilderment not at the woman he had shot, but at *her.* With a supreme effort Hilda threw off the spell, ran to her sister and knelt. Berta, the little one whom she had always tried to shield, for whom she had accepted many a buffet, shouldered the charge of many a misdeed!

"Berta, Berta!"

One corner of Berta's lips moved upward —a touch of the old irony. "My passport . . . has come! . . . The mad fool! . . . As much as I could love any one! . . . Hilda, the ghost . . . returns to the . . . tomb!" The beautiful head sank grotesquely against Hilda's shoulder. The Yellow Typhoon had slipped down the Far Horizon.

"*Two!*" whispered Lysgaard, thickly. "Two! . . . *Gott!*" He staggered across the room. "Two! . . . And she never told me!" he babbled in German. He dropped to his knees, thrusting Hilda aside; put his sound

arm under the warm, limp body of the woman he had called his own. "Berta, Berta, little one, I did not know! Ah, God, why didn't you tell me? I thought you had betrayed me, left me for this Yankee swine! . . . *Two!*"

Mathison sprang to Hilda, raised her in his arms, and pressed her face against his shoulder. A miracle had happened. Berta's presence here had saved Hilda. That was the chief thought in Mathison's mind. Closely he pressed the loved one to him, so that she might not see the second tragedy, should Lysgaard turn upon him. But even as he made the movement he saw a strange action take place. Berta's body slid slowly from Lysgaard's arm. The man's shoulders pinched themselves together convulsively and his head went back with a spasmodic jerk. Then he fell across Berta's body. Mathison thought he had fainted, but later he learned that the bullet that had shattered the hand had ricocheted and plowed completely through the body. But for his tremendous vitality Lysgaard would never have reached Berta.

"Mat! Mat!" shrieked Malachi, across the tragic silence.

A month later—on a Friday afternoon—Sam Rubin stopped his limousine before a handsome apartment building and got out briskly. Under his arm was a portfolio. He rushed toward the entrance and popped into the elevator. As he was a privileged character, the maid Sarah admitted him at once and indicated that her mistress was in the living-room.

Rubin stepped jauntily along the corridor, but he stopped at the door. By one window he saw the star's mother. She was knitting, but her glance was directed toward her daughter.

"Sailorman," said Hilda.

"Sailorman," repeated Malachi, soberly, if huskily.

"Husband, lover!"

But Malachi rocked belligerently and fell to grumbling.

"I can't make him say that, mother."

"He has more serious things on his mind," interrupted Rubin, entering.

Hilda whirled. "Sam Rubin, what have you got under your arm?"

"A bully new play for you; fit you like a glove."

"I'm so glad! Work, work, work; some-

thing new and fresh that I can throw myself into!".

"Well, I've got it right here. What's the news?"

"He's with the convoy." Hilda caught her manager by the sleeve and drew him over to one of the front windows. "The star in the window—mine!"

"You're the finest woman in all this world!" said Rubin, soberly.

Hilda put her hand under the little silken banner and raised it to her lips.

THE END

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